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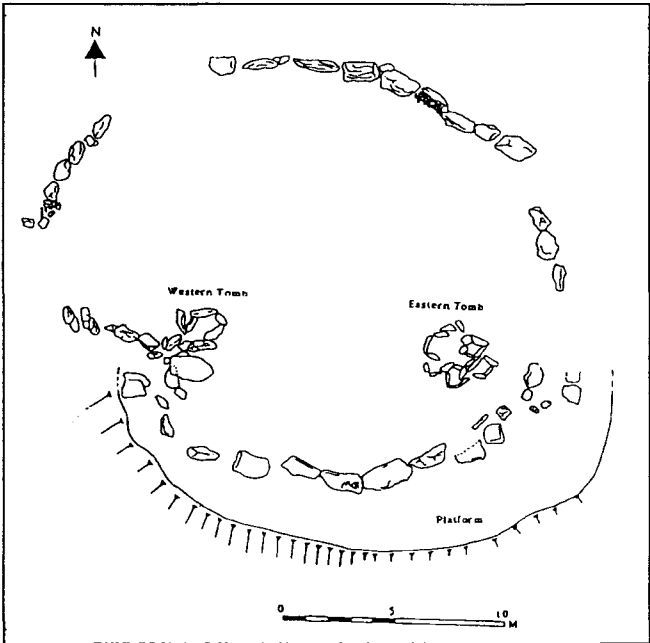
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ARTICLES

KNOCKROE AND THE NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENT OF MUNSTER

Knockroe passage tomb lies in county Kilkenny in the province of Leinster but it occurs within 200 metres of the Tipperary and Munster border. It is the best known of a thin passage tomb scatter associated with the valley of the river Suir in the province of Munster (O Nuallain & Cody 1987). Its discovery and excavation have come at an appropriate time, when the long neglected Stone Age of Munster is working its way into the forefront of archaeological research in Ireland. The spectacular art and other arresting features of the Knockroe site link into the prestigious Passage Tomb tradition that flourished in the Boyne Valley and beyond around 3000 BC. On the other hand there is a gathering body of evidence to show that sites such as Knockroe, far from being isolated Neolithic outposts, as the drift of archaeological opinion might have suggested heretofore, belong to a considerable settlement of eastern and central Munster during the Neolithic period. Neolithic settlement can be traced in a number of ways: (i) the distribution of relevant ceremonial monuments, (ii) the occurrence of excavated Neolithic habitations, (iii) the incidence of diagnostic artifacts in the landscape and (iv) the identification of appropriate diagnostic changes in pollen profiles. Each in its own way is contributing to the emerging mosaic of a Munster Neolithic. A preliminary review of the evidence is attempted

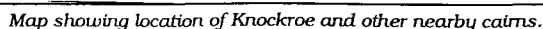
here and an effort is made to fit the prestigious Knockroe site into the overall settlement pattern.



Plan showing the platform, kerb and both tombs at Knockroe

Until the past decade it was widely accepted that the southern counties of Ireland were sparsely settled during the Stone Age (O'Kelly 1989, 36). These counties had produced no evidence of the earliest post-glacial settlers, a little known population who lived a Mesolithic lifestyle of hunting, fishing and general food gathering from about the eighth millennium BC until overtaken by a farming lifestyle at about 4000 BC (Woodman 1978, 141). One effect of the farming revolution was thought to be a dramatically increased population but this increase seemed to occur almost exclusively in the northern half of the island. Southern Neolithic sites were rationalised as late and peripheral. This conventional view was well grounded in the archaeological evidence as it stood. Neolithic settlement patterns were traced in terms of burial sites, mainly because megalithic tombs were the most visible expression of the early farmers. The builders of court tombs were considered to be the earliest: they were followed in the middle of the Irish Neolithic by the passage tomb builders and eventually by a complex known as the late Neolithic which included portal tombs and a practice of individual burial (Herity 1991). Distribution maps showed that almost all court tombs lay north of a line from Galway to Dundalk (Herity & Eogan 1977, 53); passage tombs showed a similar northern bias with a tilt towards the eastern counties and a thin scatter of sites in central Munster (*ibid.*, 62); and the Late Neolithic complex suggested an even heavier interest in the southern counties (*ibid.*, 86). This was taken to indicate that Munster remained largely a virgin territory until the end of the Neolithic. Lough Gur in country Limerick, a major Neolithic settlement which continued into the Early Bronze Age (O Riordain 1954), was assigned to this late phase (Herity & Eogan 1977, 104-107). The dramatic proliferation of sites in the southern half of Ireland during the immediately following Early Bronze Age seemed to confirm the trend. In particular almost 50% of wedge tombs, the most numerous class of megalith and considered then to be an Early Bronze Age phenomenon, occur in the Munster counties (Shee Twohig 1990, 57).

The model outlined above has run into a number of fundamental difficulties during the 1980s and 1990s. The Mesolithic map no longer excludes Munster (Woodman 1989) and a site dated to the later Mesolithic period has been under excavation on the Dingle peninsula for some years (Woodman 1993). Palynological research conducted at Cashelkeelty in county Kerry has produced evidence of forest clearance on the Beara peninsula during the Mesolithic/Neolithic transition (Lynch 1981). A few grains of cereal pollen were also recorded and, in spite of subsequent doubts about their value, the overall profile is regarded as a fingerprint of human activity (Cooney



In recent times the recovery of samples for radiocarbon dating has become a standard practice in Irish archaeology. At the same time a reliable system has been developed for correcting the known flaws in the radiocarbon method and it is now possible to express a radiocarbon date in terms of a relatively true calendrical chronology. These advances have enabled archaeologists to suggest a date of 4000 BC or slightly earlier for the beginning of the Neolithic in Ireland (Cooney & Grogan 1994, 29-32). The period then continued for approximately two thousand years, an enormous expanse of time and considerably in excess of the five hundred years envisaged by Piggott in his classic account of Neolithic life in these islands, written before radiocarbon dating began to make an impact (1954, 374-5, figure 64).

There is, therefore, an enticing body of evidence in favour of re-assessing our understanding of Neolithic settlement patterns throughout the southern counties of Ireland. If the difference between the settlement of the southern and northern halves of Ireland is not one primarily of chronology, which was the favoured explanation in the past, then what is it? One obvious difference is visible in the distribution of megalithic tombs. These monuments are rare in Munster, apart from wedge tombs which are not immediately relevant because even an optimistic viewpoint would place them towards the end of the Neolithic (O'Brien 1993). By contrast it happens that the practice of individual burial is proportionately more common in the southern half of the country (Herity 1982, 282). Since the identification of these sites depends, for the most part, on excavation, their discovery is normally accidental. It can be taken for granted, in the circumstances, that the number of known sites is a gross underestimation of their true incidence. Perhaps, therefore, for whatever reasons, collective burial in megalithic tombs was less favoured than individual burial in the southern region. If this is true then there may be other cultural practices in which the Munster region differs from areas further north. We might envisage the southern Neolithic not as an ephemeral late extension of Neolithic settlement but as a distinctive regional manifestation of the insular Neolithic of Ireland and Britain.

The evidence from the ceremonial monuments points to a strong settlement in the catchment of the three sister rivers, the Barrow, Nore and Suir, and their neighbour the Slaney (O Nuallain 1983, 83;

O Nuallain & Cody 1987) and also a less concentrated settlement on the limestone lands of Clare, south Galway and north Tipperary (ibid. 75-7). Looked at more closely it becomes apparent that the passage tombs tend to cluster on prominent eminences surrounding the Lingaun and Aherlow rivers which are tributaries of the Suir. The individual burials have a tendency to cluster near tributaries of the Barrow, Nore and Slaney, but set back on terraces above the rivers. The portal tombs are found near virtually every significant river in the south-eastern counties and a further group occurs between Tramore Bay and the river Suir in county Waterford.

But what of the mundane aspects of life as represented by domestic, agricultural and industrial activity? The evidence here is patchy. The houses at Lough Gur and Tankardstown are prominent snapshots of what life may have been like over the two thousand year course of the Neolithic. Both sites lie within 25 kilometres of the passage tombs associated with the Aherlow river and are thus linked tenuously into the wider riverine network reflected in the distribution of ceremonial monuments. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there was an individual burial of a classic type lying near some houses at site C in Lough Gur. Rectangular wooden houses were represented in the evidence at both Tankardstown and Lough Gur. The Lough Gur houses featured a different building technique and there are suggestions that it might have been a slightly later style. Apart from the rectangular houses, circular structures were also built in the same technique and later houses were surrounded by an enclosure (Grogan & Eogan 1987). More than a thousand cereal grains, an enormous cache by Neolithic standards, were recovered during the Tankardstown excavations. The radiocarbon dates from these grains suggest that they grew before 3500 BC. They are the earliest clearly dated macro-fossils from any site in Ireland (Monk 1993, 44) and they demonstrate that the cultivation of emmer wheat formed part of the earlier Neolithic economy. Animal bones representing sheep, cattle and pigs were also recorded at Tankardstown, as were some other food resources such as hazelnut. At Lough Gur 95% of the bones recovered during the excavations were from cattle (Grogan & Eogan 1987, 486). The evidence for cereal growing was limited and indirect.

Lough Gur and Tankardstown both came to archaeological attention by chance. Sean P. Ó Riordain undertook to excavate the Knockadoon houses because a surface examination of Site A suggested that it might prove to be contemporary with a complex of medieval houses which he was excavating at nearby Carraig Aille (1954, 299). The Tankardstown houses, as noted earlier, were discovered during a gas pipeline project in the 1980s. The element of chance will continue to determine the pattern of discovery of Neolithic houses in the foreseeable future. The possibility of finding a fossilised Neolithic farmland underneath peat bogs, especially in the southwest, remains a source of hope (Cuppage 1986, 17) although the evidence from the Dingle peninsula suggests that much of the blanket cover may have come after the Early Bronze Age. New methods of tracking ancient activity, based on wedding the old practice of fieldwalking to a more systematic methodology, have suggested, in pilot studies, that Stone Age settlement in Munster was relatively intense and can be logged comprehensively in due course (Green & Zvelebil 1990). However, the information emerging from these studies to date is localised and partial.

The recently discovered complex of passage tombs associated with the river Lingaun is, in some respects, a microcosm of recent developments and still outstanding problems in the southern Neolithic. As late as the 1970s only the unopened cairn on the summit of Slievenamon found its way into distribution maps (Herity 1974, 206-7, figure 137). In the 1980s a more intensive survey of the area appeared (O Nuallain and Cody 1987) in which two passage tombs were confirmed in county Kilkenny, one in Knockroe townland and one at Baunfree on the summit of Kilmacoliver hill near the village of Tullahought. In addition, a second unopened cairn was recognised on Slievenamon. Further arguments in favour of identifying the Slievenamon cairns as passage tombs have been put forward since then; another circular tumulus has been found in the townland of

Mangan near Ninemilehouse; and a record of a destroyed megalithic tomb in the townland of Frankfort near Windgap has been included as a possible addition (O'Sullivan 1993, 14-17). The cairn at the summit of Slievenamon is visible from all these sites. It is sited so that it dominates a swathe of countryside extending over many miles to the east while remaining invisible from the western side of the mountain. By this seemingly inconsequential choice, its builders communicated a typical awareness of landscape and, at the same time, left valuable hints about the location of the target population.

Spreading east from this cairn there is a thin scatter of sites which seems to follow the course of the Lingaun river, a tributary which rises on the flanks of Slievenamon and flows into the Suir to the east of Carrick. Most of the cairns are prominently sited on local eminences but one, at Knockroe, is modestly situated on the side of a valley close to the river. Remarkably, it is this seemingly inconspicuous site that establishes the whole group as an important element of the southern Neolithic and pulls it into the limelight of the wider Irish and north-west European Passage Tomb tradition.

KNOCKROE PASSAGE TOMB

Knockroe is a distinguished site by any standards. When first it came to prominence two features, in particular, were seen to set it apart: (1) its megalithic art and (2) the incorporation of two tombs within a single mound. It was these distinctive features and the location of the site on the perceived frontier of the Passage Tomb distribution that caused the monument to be targeted for a research excavation in the first half of the 1990s.

About thirty decorated stones have now been recorded at the site. They are distributed more or less evenly between the eastern tomb, the western tomb and the kerb. Only at the three massive Boyne Valley cairns of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth is there a substantially larger number of decorated stones (O'Sullivan 1988, 275-6, table 3). The impressive Cairn T at Loughcrew, it must be said, has thirty-two decorated stones but the equally impressive Cairn L has only twenty-three. Sixty-four decorated stones are known from Millin Bay on the Ards peninsula in county Down, but this is an unusual collection and many of the stones appear to be fragments. The scale of the megalithic art at Knockroe is further underlined by the number of decorated kerbstones (O'Sullivan 1987, 92). Stylistically some of the designs find their best parallels at Knowth and at sites in Brittany in northwestern France. To that extent at least, Knockroe shared in a mature seaborne international tradition from which inland sites like Loughcrew became increasingly detached. This re-emphasises the role of the rivers as a link between the southern passage tombs. The tragedy of the Knockroe megalithic art is that much of it has been seriously eroded by the effects of weathering. This erosion is likely to accelerate unless it is protected soon from the corrosive effects of acid rain and the unwitting damage of visitors.

As O Nuallain & Cody have already indicated, Knockroe joins a small number of sites in Ireland in which more than one tomb is incorporated. Knowth, Dowth and Baltinglass are obvious parallels. All are decorated sites. At Dowth, as at Knockroe, both tombs occur in the southern half of the circular cairn. Baltinglass in county Wicklow, the nearest decorated site to Knockroe, overlooks the Slaney and is thus linked to Knockroe by the riverine network described earlier. Knowth is perhaps the most dramatic parallel. Although built on a considerably greater scale, it shares a number of remarkable features with Knockroe: (1) both incorporate two tombs, a simple tomb on the western side and a compartmentalised tomb on the eastern side; (2) both reflect a preference for the southern side in the distribution of the kerb art; and (3) both occur near a south-swinging bend in a river, Knowth beside the Boyne and Knockroe beside the Lingaun. In addition, at Knockroe, as at Newgrange and probably Knowth, there seems to have been some kind of quartz fringe on the mound above the kerbstones in the vicinity of the tomb entrance (O'Sullivan 1993, 12-14). Finally, like Newgrange, Knockroe features a solstice alignment. As the sun sinks below the horizon to the south-west on the afternoon of December 21st its rays penetrate directly up the

passage of the western tomb. Since there had been considerable structural damage it was impossible to say whether, like Newgrange, this arrangement was facilitated by a roofbox.

The western tomb is flanked by an impressive facade of sandstone blocks, some of which, especially nearer the entrance, are stood upright. As far as the author knows this facade arrangement is unique in the Passage Tomb architectural tradition. It may indicate a slight overlap with the court tradition in court tombs and some portal tombs. There was evidence of some activity, probably ceremonial, on the platform in front of the tomb. The upright stones in the facade establish an interesting link with the denuded cairn at Baunfree which is visible from Knockroe. Some of the kerbstones at this site are stood on end, as are those in the Knockroe facade.

The eastern tomb at Knockroe is remarkable for the absence of an outer passage. This is a rare occurrence in Irish passage tombs and it may be unique in that the excavation showed it unequivocally to be an original feature of the structure (O'Sullivan 1995, 24). It may be inferred, with a certain amount of justification, that the absence of a passage at Baunfree and Slievenamon may also have been an original structural element. To this short list may be added Shrough, another passage-less tomb, which is situated above the Aherlow river north of the Galtee mountains. Likewise, the plan of the eastern tomb reflects unmistakable echoes of Duntryleague, another of the Aherlow sites which is situated about 7 kilometres southwest of Shrough (Ibid.). This again binds Knockroe into the scattered network of the Suir tributaries.

Both tombs at Knockroe have been excavated and have produced standard Passage Tomb funerary material. There was a considerable density of cremated bone representing a minimum of a few score individuals. These included adults and children. A small quantity of unburnt bone was also recovered. Some of it was human and some bovine. The discovery of small slabs of slate lying horizontally amongst the burial deposits indicated that some of the burials at least had been deposited separately and protected in this rudimentary way. This ritual is also known in the Boyne valley. The burial deposits were accompanied by a standard range of Passage Tomb grave goods: bone pins, stone beads, stone pendants, pieces of antler shaft and sherds of pottery. The standard Passage Tomb pottery, known as Carrowkeel ware, was present and, amongst the cremated bone in one recess of the eastern tomb, there was found the crushed remains of a pot which must have been intact when inserted.

Fragments of pins manufactured from the metacarpals of sheep, which were recovered in both tombs, are of particular interest (O'Sullivan 1995, 27, figure 5, nos. 88, 142 and 190). These are a classic Neolithic type. They are known from domestic contexts throughout Neolithic Europe, including Britain, and they are also known to a lesser extent from burial contexts. In Ireland they are not known outside the Passage Tomb tradition. None has been recorded from a court tomb or portal tomb and they also appear to be absent from domestic contexts. Even at Lough Gur, where bone pins were recovered in great quantities, this type is unknown. The occurrence of the type at Knockroe and at a number of other Irish passage tombs is therefore intriguing. On the one hand it belongs to a continental undercurrent which is also evident in a number of other, more obvious, aspects of the Irish Passage Tomb world. On the other hand, being a domestic and utilitarian artifact, it represents a paradox in the Irish Passage Tomb burial tradition. Almost all other grave goods appear to be decorative or symbolic items, such as beads, spacers, pendants, maceheads or enigmatic balls which are sometimes conjoined in parts. Even the mushroom-headed pin, a diagnostic Irish passage tomb grave good, is sometimes so large as to suggest a ceremonial rather than practical use. There are also reasonable arguments for interpreting the distinctive Carrowkeel pottery bowls, such as that found at Knockroe, as the vessels in which the cremated remains were brought to the tomb.

KNOCKROE AND THE SOUTHERN NEOLITHIC

In spite of its isolated location, inconspicuous siting and relatively modest size, Knockroe passage tomb is a monument of considerable importance to any study of the Irish Neolithic and, in particular, the southern Neolithic. The riverine network discussed in an earlier paragraph links it to Baltinglass Hill, its nearest decorated neighbour and a site to which it is linked by elements of its morphology. Further afield it seems to have shared in the cosmopolitan world of the developed Passage Tomb tradition which is represented elsewhere by the great Boyne Valley sites in county Meath and a number of prestigious sites around the Golfe du Morbihan near Carnac in north-western France. The metacarpal pin roots it back into the domestic world of earlier Neolithic communities on the European mainland.

Locally, by analogy with the normal cemetery pattern of Irish passage tombs, its siting renders it subservient to the cairn on the summit of Slievenamon (O'Sullivan 1993, 14-16). However, pending any surprise information which is not yet available from the Slievenamon cairn, Knockroe appears to be the more prestigious site in almost every other way. It is the flagship of the local passage tomb fleet. Indeed it would not be an exaggeration to say that Knockroe was the ceremonial jewel in the crown of the Three Sisters region during the developed Neolithic. And this network extends into the Shannon and Maigue basin in the north Limerick plain. But we do not know how tightly Knockroe was bound into the essence of this extended settlement network. The excavations at Lough Gur and Tankardstown have revealed insights into secular Neolithic life in Munster. However, although these can be linked tenuously to Knockroe via the Aherlow, Suir and Lingaun rivers, there is a dearth of hard information about day-to-day life in the Neolithic of south-east Ireland. Efforts have recently been made by systematic fieldwalking to identify traces of Stone Age settlement along some of the rivers in the south-east (Green & Zvelebil 1990; Ramsden 1991-2; Ramsden *et al* 1995). These have shown successfully that settlement in the area, both during the Mesolithic and Neolithic, was considerably more intense than previous methods of study had suggested. But this *modus operandi* is in its infancy and the information deriving from it is limited. There are two principal limitations. Firstly, in order to be effective it needs to be applied comprehensively along the relevant river networks, in this case the Lingaun and associated waterways. This is an enormous programme of research. Secondly, by its nature such fieldwork can log the distribution and intensity of Neolithic activity in a chosen area but it may not succeed in discriminating between different types of settlement. In particular it may not isolate the Stone Age habitations which we need to study in order to fill in the domestic flipside of the Passage Tomb landscape. Nevertheless it is the only viable approach than can be applied systematically. The alternative is chance discovery.

CONCLUSION

The megalithic survey conducted over many years by archaeologists in the Ordnance Survey has ensured that our knowledge of the ceremonial landscape of southern Ireland is relatively comprehensive (de Valera & O Nuallain 1961 and 1982; O Nuallain 1983; O Nuallain & Cody 1987). But it is clear that gaps remain to be closed, especially in completing the distribution of Neolithic individual burials. Surprise discoveries such as the Knockroe passage tomb will continue to emerge in the meantime and focused landscape studies, which have already shown their value in parts of Munster, will continue to reveal new dimensions of Stone Age settlement in the region. The excavation of a few domestic sites discovered by chance gives an insight into the variety of day-to-day settlement patterns that may have existed. However, apart from the Tankardstown houses, which resemble those found occasionally in other parts of Ireland, it is unclear how representative these sites may be. Fieldwalking surveys have already provided results on a small scale but they too are limited in their value. Even in the areas surveyed, only a sample of fields is walked. Pollen diagrams from the peninsulas of Cork and Kerry have produced traces of Neolithic

activity that are not yet evident in the archaeological record *per se*. But such archaeological evidence may lie hidden beneath the upland blanket bogs which are so prevalent in the area. Regardless of this possibility, enough has been discovered to whet one's appetite and to suggest that the unravelling of the Munster Neolithic will be an important element of Irish archaeological studies in the coming years.

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Abbreviations:

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ULSTER AND THE IRISH SEA REGION IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

The overriding theme of Irish history, and the thing that supplies the essential dynamic of Irish foreign policy to this day, is the relationship with our sister island across the 'narrow sea'. It is probably true to say that no part of Ireland has had more prolonged contact with Britain than the coastal districts of Ulster from Donegal Bay to Carlingford Lough, and that no part of Ulster had more intimate links with Britain, for obvious geographical reasons, than the Antrim and Down coasts. This is the area that was conquered in 1177 by the English adventurer, John de Courcy, an enterprise which was remarkable in many respects.

If one follows the pattern of English conquests in Ireland from the late 1160s onwards - first, the occupation of Leinster, then the seizure of Dublin, then Hugh de Lacy's push northwards into Meath - the next area ripe for conquest was the south Ulster kingdom of Airgialla, certainly that portion of it which now forms County Louth. But in the early weeks of 1177 de Courcy and his men rode straight through County Louth and on to Down, and conquered instead the kingdom of Ulaid, which approximates to Counties Antrim and Down. They, therefore, did a leapfrog over an important stretch of unconquered territory, and de Courcy became master of a substantial but isolated lordship up in the north-east which was cut off from the rest of the colony in Ireland, and which, at least in its early stages, did not have a land-corridor to it.

So the question is: why did de Courcy pick the kingdom of Ulaid? Could it be that he was indifferent to its land-locked isolation, and did not care about not having a land-corridor to the rest of the colony? In fact, might de Courcy have been interested in Ulster not in spite of its location but because of it?

There are grounds for thinking that this is the case, and that what caused de Courcy to contemplate the conquest of Ulster in the first place was his own family background. Traditionally, de Courcy has been regarded as having come from Somerset. So, his invasion of Ulster has seemed to come out of the blue, by a man who had no previous contact with the region. There is, however, evidence that de Courcy's background lay, not in faraway Somerset, but in an area not much more than seventy miles away from Ulster, directly across the Irish Sea in the north-western corner of England. What is more, de Courcy secured his grip on Ulster only because he quickly instituted an elaborate process of colonisation: but those who took the lead in this affair, those who backed his initial invasion and then planted the newly conquered lands with peasant settlers, they too came overwhelmingly from that same part of England, the north-west. Therefore, the key that opens the door, that explains de Courcy's conquest, has been missing from previous discussions of the de Courcy conquest, and that key is the connection between the north-east of Ulster and the north-west of England.

A word should be said about the Somerset connection. John de Courcy was a member of a family with lands in Somerset, who were patrons of the Benedictine priory at Stogursey (or Stoke Courcy) in Somerset, and one of the religious houses which John founded in Ulster - Black Abbey in the Ards peninsula - was a dependent house of Stogursey. This is proof of his connection with this important line of the de Courcy family. What is often forgotten, though, is that during the twelfth century the centre of gravity of the de Courcys shifted northwards as a result of a marriage by which they became lords of Copeland in Cumberland and of other lands in the north-west and in Yorkshire.

If we examine John de Courcy's other monastic foundations in Ulster, this is the area that keeps cropping up. There are six of them. John's first recorded act of generosity towards the church came in 1179 when he granted the lands of the old unreformed monastery at Nendrum, Co. Down, to the monks of St Bees' Benedictine priory in Copeland and its mother-house, St. Mary's abbey, York. St Bees had been founded around 1125 by a man, William Meschin, who was most probably de Courcy's maternal grandfather. Soon afterwards, when de Courcy decided to establish a house for Cistercians at Inch in Co. Down, he filled it with monks from Furness in Lancashire. A couple of years later John decided to set up a priory of Augustinian canons at Toberglorie near Downpatrick, and this he made a cell of St Mary's, Carlisle. At about the same time he set up a Benedictine priory at Downpatrick itself, which was made subject to St. Werburgh's Abbey, Chester. His most famous foundation was the Cistercian Grey Abbey, which he and his wife founded in 1193, and it was made a daughter-house of Holm Cultram at the northern end of Cumbria. When he set up a house for Premonstratensian canons at Carrickfergus, he had to go further afield for a parent-house - it was made subject to the abbot of Dryburgh, which is across the Scottish border in Berwickshire on the east coast. But the thing to note about Dryburgh is that it was founded by the de Morville family, members of which held the lordships of North and South Westmorland and the barony of Burgh-by-Sands in Cumberland. This link with Cumbria probably provides the key. So six of the seven religious houses founded by John de Courcy and made dependent on another-house in Britain, point to a Cumbrian link, and the balance of probability must be that the favour which de Courcy showed to the churches of the north-west of England after his conquest of Ulster is to be accounted for by earlier links with the region.

The same is true of the men who followed him to Ulster. The foundation charters of several of these houses survive, as do a significant number of legal deeds drawn up during John's time in

Ulster. The witnesses whose names are appended to these documents were usually de Courcy men; men who came to Ulster with him, and owed their position there to his influence. If to these we add incidental mentions of others in government records and narrative accounts, it is possible to assemble together a list of at least sixty lay individuals who acquired lands or office in de Courcy's Ulster lordship. Now, some of these are impossible to identify because we only have a first name or a very common patronymic, but it is possible to offer an identification of about half the total, and to trace their place of origin. Of those whose origin I have so far managed to track down, almost all come from the north of England, particularly Cheshire, Lancashire, and modern-day Cumbria inland as far as West Yorkshire.

I have not the space here to examine each in turn, but a couple of examples may serve to illustrate the point. Just north of Warrington in Lancashire, in the parish of Winwick, lies the village of Croft. In 1212, Gilbert de Croft held a carucate of land in Croft, and a further one and a half carucates in Southworth in the same parish. He made a northward move by marrying the heiress of the manor of Dalton in Kendal in Westmorland and it is with this area, Kendal, that he and his descendants were associated; they also held other lands in Lonsdale (on the borders of Lancashire and Westmorland). Starting in the 1170s and running all the way through to the 1220s, Gilbert and his brother Roger turn up as witnesses to grants made to the religious houses of Cumbria, St Bees, Furness, Cockersand, and so on, and are associated with some of the most wealthy and influential people in the region. But what interests us here is that at that same moment the brothers Gilbert and Roger de Croft were busy extending their landed interests even further to the north-west, into Ulster, where they were among John de Courcy's most prominent lieutenants. In or before 1183 Gilbert was sufficiently endowed with lands in Ulster to co-found a house of Augustinian canons at Muckamore near the north-eastern shore of Lough Neagh. In addition, both brothers made a grant of two carucates of land in Ulster to the monastery at Nendrum on the shores of Stangford Lough.

Here we have, cropping up all the time in the English records, a Lancashire gentry family, very active in the region, going about its business, extending into Lonsdale and Kendal, granting portions of their new acquisitions to the church, associated with some of the most prominent men in Lancashire, Cumberland, Westmorland, and yet, at the same time, they figure as what are sometimes called colonists in Ulster, but in precisely the same capacity, extending the family's landed interests, witnessing charters of the lord of Ulster, and giving away some of their own lands to the church. It makes one wonder whether the de Croft family believed that there was all that great a difference between pushing north from Lancashire into Cumberland and Westmorland - still in the twelfth century a contentious border-zone between England and Scotland - and pushing westwards across the Irish Sea into Ulster.

It is important to bear in mind that in the twelfth century Cumbria still bore quite a marked Gaelic imprint. Geoffrey Barrow says of Cumberland, in commenting on the prevalence there of both Gaelic and Brittonic personal names, that it 'can hardly be thought of as English, in any sense but the political, until the last quarter of the twelfth century' and that even then 'any picture of the social and racial composition of the northern counties...must, if it is to carry conviction, take account of the use of Celtic along with English and Scandinavian names by nobles, freeholders, and peasantry alike' (G.W.S. Barrow, 'Northern English society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries', *Northern History*, 4 (1969), 7). This is, most probably, the part of England where John de Courcy cut his teeth, and this background is crucial. It meant that the north-western coast of England and the north-eastern coast of Ireland were not separated by the enormous chasm we imagine, so that settling down there, adapting to it, enticing others to join one there, these were by no means as difficult as we imagine.

From the start, John de Courcy, as is well known, adopted a policy of fostering devotion to the Irish saints, particularly Patrick, Brigid and Colum Cille. Historians have tended to doubt his sincerity in doing so, since this made it easier for him to step into the shoes of ousted native rivals. However, the English house with which he was most closely associated was St Bees' in Copeland. By tradition, St Bees' was an early Christian religious community established by the Irish saint, Bega. But when William Meschin, the man who appears to have been John's grandfather, founded a Benedictine priory on the site around 1125, he did not rededicate it; it became the priory of St Bees', and one scholar who has studied this whole period of intensive church foundation in Cumbria in the aftermath of the Norman conquest of the region has concluded that a flowering of the cults of Celtic saints was taking place there at the time (R.K. Rose, 'Cumbrian society and the Anglo-Norman church', in *Religion and National Identity*, ed. Stuart Mews (Oxford, 1982), 119-35. Not far from St Bees lies a parish which, since the twelfth century at least, has been dedicated to St Brigid, and in the mid-twelfth century a priest at St Bees bore the name 'Coremac Gille Becoc' - Cormac devotee of St Bega - a name that is so strikingly Gaelic that he would surely have had little difficulty fitting in if he sought a career in de Courcy's Ulster.

So de Courcy himself, more than likely, was not engaged in cynical exploitation by promoting devotion to Irish saints, as when he commissioned Jocelin, a member of the Cistercian community at Furness, to write his *Life of St Patrick*. Another Cistercian whom de Courcy probably admired was Everard, the abbot of Holm Cultram who died in 1192 after forty years in office, and whose death perhaps inspired John and his wife to found a daughter-house in Ulster in the following year. But we get an insight into the religious and cultural milieu in which these Cumbrian clerics functioned from the fact that Abbot Everard composed lives of two early Irish abbots of Iona, Cumméne Ailbe and Adomnán himself. With churchmen like this by his side, it is small wonder that de Courcy himself should foster devotion to Iona's founding-saint.

So, it might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that the conqueror of Ulster was a man tinged with a faint Gaelic hue, who did not find an entirely alien society awaiting him in Ulster, and who, therefore, easily attracted to his cause men who hailed from the same neck of the woods, and who shared his outlook. One would not want to stretch the point too much, and to argue that the migration of these people to Ulster was all that much different from the process of conquest initiated elsewhere in Ireland by the events of 1169.

Nevertheless, there were several distinct features. I have mentioned that one of the houses upon which de Courcy bestowed most favour was Furness in Lancashire and that it developed close links with Ulster in the aftermath of his invasion. This is understandable, and very typical. What is less typical is the fact that Furness acquired its first daughter-house in Ulster in 1127, a full half-century before de Courcy appeared on the scene. And this house was founded by Mac Duinnlébhe, the reigning king of the Ulaíd: so here we have native Irish kings of Ulster opening up their kingdom to new English and international influences. What de Courcy did was to push this process one step further, but, in a sense, this secular expansion into Ulster was lagging behind the ecclesiastical.

The Isle of Man had a role to play in all of this. One of the reasons that John de Courcy was able to conquer Ulaíd, the kingdom of east Ulster, was because he had the support of the king of the Isle of Man. The Ulaíd were a maritime people, traditional enemies of the inhabitants of the Isle of Man, which lay no more than forty miles off their coast. Almost certainly, the Manx gave de Courcy naval support that enabled him to hold out in Ulster. The alliance was formalised by the marriage of John de Courcy to Affreca, the daughter of the king of Man. Now, the Cistercian abbey at Furness had a daughter house on the Isle of Man at Rushen abbey. The two other Cumbrian houses most favoured by de Courcy were Holm Cultram and St Bees, and both received lands and grants of privileges from John's father-in-law, the king of Man.

The extension of these houses' interests into Man was a natural one, and there was an equivalent extension of interests by Ulster houses into the Isle of Man. Bangor and Saul were among the most prestigious ecclesiastical centres in Ulster, and their superiors were prominent among the clerical witnesses to de Courcy deeds, but both Bangor and Saul had lands on the Isle of Man. So the Isle of Man was, in effect, a bridge linking Cumbria and Ulster. This was a very important axis: Man provided for these Cumbrian monastic houses a stepping-stone to Ulster, and de Courcy was its secular equivalent, hence his choice of a Manx princess as his wife.

So a Cumbria-Man-Ulster bridge existed before 1177: de Courcy simply added to the intensity of it and greatly altered its complexion. There was also a Scottish ingredient in the mixture. It is clear that many of the families who were enticed to Ulster from this point on had put down, or were in the process of putting down, roots in Scotland. For instance, one of de Courcy's principal lieutenants was a man called Richard fitz Truite who held New Abbey in Kircudbrightshire of the lord of Galloway. In 1166 his brother Robert witnessed King William the Lion's famous grant of Annadale to the first Robert Bruce. Among those who crossed the North Channel during the de Courcy era, and who became the holder of sufficient territory in Ulster to be able to bestow a carucate of land on the priory of Nendrum, was Stephen Locard. He is probably the same Stephen Locard after whom is named Stevenston, which is about five miles north-west of Irvine in Ayrshire, which he held of the de Morvilles. Another Ulster tenant who had a Scottish link is Walter de Logan, who founded a family which remained important in Ulster throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, but it is thought that they take their name from a place near Auchinleck in Ayrshire. The possibility of an Ayrshire link is interesting because the ruler of this area, Duncan of Carrick, was a staunch supporter of de Courcy, who fought with him in Ulster in 1197, gaining lands there in return, and who assisted in the overthrow, in 1210, of de Courcy's successor, Hugh de Lacy.

So we see taking place during the de Courcy era the establishment of close new links, and the continuance of earlier ones, between east Ulster, greater Galloway, Cumbria and the Isle of Man. It was a relationship that existed before de Courcy, and that outlasted him, but it is a vitally important one, and much that happened later and much that went to shape the history of Ulster and of Ireland as a whole can best be explained in the light of it.

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Note:

(I have dealt with this subject at greater length in my paper 'The first Ulster plantation: John de Courcy and the men of Cumbria', in T.B. Barry, Robin Frame and Katharine Simms (eds.), *Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland. Essays presented to J. F. Lydon* (London, 1995).)

SETTLING THE GLENS: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SETTLEMENT IN THE GLENS OF ANTRIM

In 1604 Randall Macdonnell, later first earl of Antrim, received a grant from James I of almost 460,000 statute acres in north Antrim. Even by contemporary standards this was enormous. Seven years later when land was allocated in the escheated counties of Ulster as part of the plantation scheme, 2,000 acres was regarded as sufficient for a substantial landlord. Macdonnell was not unique in early modern Ireland - the earl of Clanricard held almost half a million statute acres in county Galway - but he was certainly unusual. There were, of course, special circumstances behind the grant. The king was concerned that the east coast of county Antrim should be settled as quickly as possible to repel highland Scots who had proved so

disruptive to the balance of political power in sixteenth century Ulster. Macdonnell, on the other hand, wished to assert familial rights to the territory acquired by purchase, conquest or marriage since the fourteenth century, although his personal claim to those rights was somewhat dubious.¹

Whatever the rationale for this enormous grant, the problems it presented were the same for king and landowner. To secure the territory both politically and economically Macdonnell had to stamp his personal authority on it. Given a region of that size it would not be an easy task. The problem became more pressing over time. With the rise to political prominence in Scotland of the Macdonnell enemies, the Campbell family, personified by the earl of Argyll, the Macdonnell power base there collapsed and they lost their Kintyre estates.² After the 1660s Ulster land was the only land the Antrim family owned and it had to be made to pay and to be kept under some kind of control. The settling of the glens of Antrim, an area roughly corresponding to the barony of Glenarme, provides an instructive case study of how this daunting task was undertaken.

The problem of controlling and exploiting the glens was particularly acute because of the geography of the area. Most contemporaries saw the glens of Antrim in an unflattering light. John Dymmoch in 1600 noted that the Antrim coast was 'backed on one side with steep boggy mountains and on the other side by the sea'.³ Those who compiled the barony descriptions for the *Civil Survey* in 1654 noted that 'the soil of this barony upon the sea coast is indifferent good generally though in some places it is 'craggy, shrubby and rocky with great glens'.⁴ More picturesquely, Richard Dobbs in 1683 referred to the area as 'an ordinary petticoat with gold lace about the skirt'.⁵ More precision on the land quality is possible using the Books of Survey and 'Distribution made in the 1660s'.⁶ Here the surveyors estimated that almost a third of the five parishes making up the barony of Glenarme was unprofitable land. This topography meant that it was a difficult area for travellers. Dobbs stressed that any one travelling in the region needed to be accompanied by a guide and even the roads were poor. From Glenarme to Red Bay the road was 'very deep in winter yet many steep passages ill to ride up and down, both ways are not to be recommended either in summer or winter'. The modern travellers view of the glens linked along a north-south axis dates only from the 1830s, when the modern coast road was constructed. The inhabitants of the seventeenth century were content with an east-west view of the world with the glens giving access into the middle of county Antrim.

These geographical characteristics created a region which, while it had a certain topographical unity, was economically highly fragmented. The glens was not an economic region but a series of micro-economies which were interconnected by coastal trade, but in the main functioned independently from each other. Richard Dobbs's 1683 description of the region enables us to reconstruct some of these regions. In the southern part of the barony, lay the first of these regions in the most agriculturally productive area around Carncastle. The parish of Carncastle, the Books of Survey and Distribution noted, contained only 3.9 per cent unprofitable land and, according to Dobbs, the soil was 'deep clay, very good ground but much worn out with ploughing for oats'. So good was the land that no fallow was included in the crop rotations. There are other indications of good agricultural land. In the 1620s rents were paid at least partly in grain and a number of corn mills existed in this area also.

In the middle of the barony was a region concentrated on Glenarme. Here the earl of Antrim had his hunting lodge in the early seventeenth century and a permanent residence later. Large sections of this area were declared unprofitable by the Books of Survey and Distribution. The unprofitable portion of 61 per cent in the case of the parish of Ardcinnis was due to the earl's deerparks. The presence of the earl attracted the estate officials and, in the 1680s, the earl's local agent lived at Carnlough, while some of the earliest seventeenth century settlement in the glens took place at Glenarme. However, the main activity in this region was that of trading, both legally and

illegally. The road which leads through Glenarme into Broughshane in mid-Antrim was the main access for Scottish merchants landing on the Antrim coast inland. The importance of this trading activity is indicated by the fact that Glenarme was not only the earliest fair on the Antrim coast but the only one. Significantly it was the fair which developed rather than the market which was erected at the same time. Dobbs observed that 'there are two fine fairs and a market town but no market kept, everyone buying and selling as they find their opportunity'. This commercial activity was a seasonal affair, rather than the regular weekly market trade. Dobbs listed the goods on sale as including cattle, beef, flax and tallow. The import trade was small scale. Glenarme could take boats of 18-20 tons. Most of the trade was done by small-scale pedlars, rather than wholesale merchants, although, in the 1660s, three merchants in Glenarme did strike tokens which puts it in the same league as contemporary Bangor, Donaghadee and Newtownards. The activities of these pedlars, who exploited the lack of customs supervision in the remote area of Glenarme, were, noted by Thomas Monck, the surveyor of the customs in the 1630s. The merchants and pedlars' he observed 'discharge at Glenarme where there is no waiter and fill the country full of commodities whereof none appear in the book. The pedlars out of Scotland take advantage of such creeks unguarded and swarm about the country in great numbers and sell all manner of wares which they may afford at easier rates than poor shopkeepers that live in corporations...and we are beggared by these renegadoes who have no residences or places of abode in this kingdom, but bring over wares, steal the customs and convey the money over in specie and that to be small value'.⁷ In short, Glenarme became a smuggling centre.

The third micro-economic region in the barony of Glenarme was that around Waterfoot and Red Bay. Here fishing was of prime importance, although a certain amount of smuggling was probably also practised. Fish were certainly common on other parts of the Antrim coast but alternative sources of income meant they were little exploited. Dobbs, for instance, observed of Glenarme that the 'sea here affords plenty of fish but the people are in no way industrious to take them'. Further north, however, he listed a wide range of fish which were actively sought: salmon, plaice, turbot, cod, ling, whiting, halibut and mackerel. Some of these were fished from boats, but this required considerable capital investment so the poorer inhabitants fished from the beach with nets. Those who could not afford nets stole from those with nets by cutting the nets open.

Geographic and economic fragmentation was compounded by the lack of an administrative framework within which the Macdonnells might work. Few men knew anything of the sixteenth century administrative structure of the glens. The 1603 patent to Sir Randall Macdonnell granted him several 'toughes' of the glens. What exactly this meant in terms of the English common law within which Sir Randall had to work in managing his estates was vague. In Irish terms it seems to represent the tuatha or family lands of the prominent families of the region but, as one administrator put it, the term 'designates no shire, county or place of one jurisdiction, but hills and valleys between them bounded by woods'.⁸ Within these broad units there were other, smaller units, notably the townland. These also presented problems. Without maps townland boundaries fluctuated and their only real existence was in the minds of local inhabitants of the area. How information about the boundaries of townlands were to be recovered from local inhabitants was a difficult problem. As late as the 1670s, on the Antrim estate one clergyman, Andrew Rowan, paid a native inhabitant of the area the substantial sum of 4/6 for telling him what the boundaries of the townland were and he also expended 16/= at Carrickergus for a map of the county.⁹ In areas little settled boundaries were vague and possibly non-existent. The surveyors for the Books of Survey and Distribution, for example, described Ardcinnis parish as being composed of 2,937 acres divided into fourteen townlands and a further 4,557 acres of poor land for which they could find no designation.

Faced with these sorts of problems the Macdonnells went about

creating not only an economic but also a social structure through which they could administer the glens. Rather than destroy the existing administrative structure, they used it in the way most suitable to them. Thus they used the townland as their basic leasing unit. In the releasing of the estate in 1637, the glens were let by setting townlands to individuals and only one joint lease, from Glencorp, was permitted, but even here it was later to be divided between the two lessees 'by two equal moieties'.¹⁰ The reason for this practice was clear: to ensure that the person responsible for the payment of rent was clearly identified.

Townlands did not exist in isolation, for they were grouped together into manors. Sir Randall's first grant of the glens in 1604 had allowed him to erect lands of 200 acres into manors with manor courts. In fact the manors, as created, corresponded to the baronies. The manor provided a legal framework for the control of lands. The endorsements for the delivery of seisin on the 1637 releasing reveal that grants were made by manor. Witnesses were present only at the leasing of their own manor, each manor being done all on one day. Manor courts became a way of enforcing the clauses in leases and ensuring that the landlords control was maintained over his estates to the extent that none of Antrim's tenants were allowed to begin legal actions in any court before the matter had been tried in the manor court.¹¹

The combination of the townland structure and the manor court, to enforce the terms of the leases, provided the Macdonnells with the tools needed, not just for the management of an estate, but for the construction of a whole society in which kinship bonds, broken in the migration process, would be replaced by other bonds. The first task in this process was the creation of a series of freeholders, akin to the Scottish tacksmen, who would manage local areas on behalf of the earls of Antrim. The 1637 releasing provides several examples of how this process was carried out. In the southern part of the barony of Glenarme, large consolidated freeholds were established at low rents and with no entry fines mentioned in the leases. Around Agnew's Hill, Sir Patrick Agnew of Lochnaw was granted 1,439 statute acres at £29 a year and, at Carncastle, the Shaw family received at least 4,134 statute acres for £48 per annum.¹² In the northern part of the barony the settlement was rather different. Grants in the parish of Layd to Donnell Modera McAuley and Donnell Groome McAuley were equally large (around 1,000 acres statute) and at low rents, £2 a year, but they were arranged in quite different ways.¹³ Rather than being granted in a compact block, the northern grants were more fragmented including land on the coast, in the valleys and in the more upland regions. This may reflect an older pattern of landholding which was used by Sir Randall in his attempt to gain control over the estate.

This pattern of leasing had a significant impact on the social structure of the barony of Glenarme. Of the 805 households who paid hearth tax in 1666, six per cent had more than one hearth, two percentage points lower than the county total.¹⁴ The figure is even lower if towns are excluded, with two per cent of houses in the parish of Carncastle, the Shaw freehold, having more than one hearth. The same is true of Layd parish where the McAuley freehold was located. Townlands with more than one house were not concentrated in the southern, wealthy area of the barony. Instead, they were scattered throughout the barony, suggesting a well-distributed pattern of wealthy individuals, underpinned by substantial freeholds. The same picture emerges from a consideration of the 1660s subsidy rolls. Glenarme could muster only nineteen individuals liable for subsidy, while Kilconway had forty five individuals. However, the Glenarme assessment was more than four times that of the Kilconway residents.¹⁵

It seems clear that the freeholders were not chosen at random. The background of the McAuleys is not clear. They may have been native Irish or they may have been Scottish in origin. In 1607, for instance, Sir Awla McAuley from Dunbartonshire challenged Sir Randall's ownership of the glens and they may have come from this

branch.¹⁶ There was certainly a significant migration from Kintyre to Antrim after the failure of the 1607 rebellion by Angus Macdonnell in Kintyre. By 1637 they seem to have been well entrenched in the area. The background of the southern freeholders is better documented. John Shaw of Ballygalley came from Greenock and settled in county Down as tenant on four townlands, part of the Montgomery estate. In 1622 he moved, probably at Sir Randall's invitation, to the Antrim estate.¹⁷ The Agnews of Lochnaw were hereditary sheriffs of Galloway and substantial landholders in Scotland. None of these families had any kin connection with the earls of Antrim but, from the perspective of the Macdonnells, a connection was perceived to exist. A late seventeenth century history of the family referred to the settlement of county Antrim as 'Randal earl of Antrim bestows upon his own both freehold and leaseholds' (my emphasis) and 'he had many more freeholders and pensioners than I cannot call in remembrance'.¹⁸ The allegiance between these freeholders and Macdonnell was not based, as in Scotland, on a complex network of kinship, which underlay the tacksman system there. That network had been shattered by migration to Ireland. Rather what was erected in the glens as a substitute, was a network of clientship and patronage, underpinned by the favourable conditions of the freeholds and the existence of the manorial courts which enabled local arrangements to be created to suit local needs.

The story of the management of landholding in the glens of Antrim is in some ways unique but in others it is typical. Most Ulster settlers faced the same problem as the earl of Antrim, albeit on a much smaller scale and in a landscape much less fragmented topographically and economically. They had to create a network of client and patron which was built on unspoken assumptions of favourable grants in return for cooperation in local management and economic development.¹⁹ Over time such unspoken assumptions extended to other areas too, making the law of landlord and tenant, with its tenant right and three life leases renewable for ever,²⁰ one of the most intractable problems for landlords of the eighteenth century as well as the contemporary historian.

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1. For the general context see Raymond Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster: the settlement of east Ulster, 1600-41* (Cork, 1985) esp pp 85-9.
2. For this process, E.J. Cowan, 'Clan, kinship and the Campbell acquisition of Islay' in *Scottish Historical Review*, Iviii (1979).
3. John Dymmok, 'A treatise of Ireland', ed. Richard Butler in *Tracts relating to Ireland* (2 vols, Irish archaeological society, 1843) ii, pp 22-3.
4. R.C. Simington (ed), *The Civil Survey, 1654-6* (10 vols, Dublin 1931-61), x, p. 57.
5. Dobb's description of the glens is printed in George Hill, *The Macdonnells of Antrim* (Belfast, 1873), pp 381-2.
6. National Archives, Dublin, Quit Rent Office, Books of Survey and Distribution, county Antrim. There is an abstract in Hill, *Macdonnells*, pp 456-9.
7. British Library, Harley Ms 2138, f. 179v-180, Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, p 191.
8. Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, pp 18-19.
9. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T796, pp 43, 46.
10. Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, p. 70.
11. For a fuller discussion of this Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, pp 90-1, 130, 135-6, 156-8.
12. For the Agnews, Andrew Agnew, *The heridity sheriffs of Galloway* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1893) ii, pp 43-5 and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D625/3; for Shaw, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D1835/55A/83, D2977 leases of 4 and 8 Aug. 1637.
13. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D2977 4 Aug 1637 Antrim to Donnell Modera mc Cawley of Court mc Martin; 8

- Aug 1637, Antrim to Donnell Groome Mc Awley.
14. The evidence is assembled in Trevor Carleton, *Heads and hearths* (Belfast, 1991).
 15. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T808/14888.
 16. Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, p. 21.
 17. Gillespie, *Colonial Ulster*, pp 118, 133.
 18. Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D358.
 19. For the creation of these networks from another perspective, Raymond Gillespie, 'The trials of Bishop Spottiswood' in *Clogher Record* xii: 3 (1987), pp 320-33.
 20. For this complex process, Raymond Gillespie, *Settlement and survival on an Ulster estate: the Brownlow leasebook, 1667-1711* (Belfast, 1988).

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This is an ambitious book by a young American scholar. In her preface she tells us that she 'began this book with one question: why did the Christians of early Ireland support a class of religious professionals devoted to the veneration of dead holy men and women?' And, further, that 'Historians of monastic communities in Ireland and elsewhere have not fully realized the fundamental religious meaning of the nonreligious ties among medieval people, their spiritual leaders, and their saints.' Her book is her 'own solution to the mystery of saint, monks, and their lay neighbors.'

The book is divided into two parts—Settlement and The Community. It therefore deals with issues of direct interest to the members of the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement. The time-scale is A.D. 800—1200.

Her introduction deals with the saints and the sources. Rather than a rigorous examination of primary material it is a discursive view of early Ireland by way of background. It very soon becomes clear that Dr Bitel's main source (almost exclusively so) is hagiography. The result is a view of the early Irish Church that is quite remarkable. In some ways it is a review of early Irish monasticism similar to that of Fr John Ryan in his famous book *Irish Monasticism* written in 1931. Dr Bitel is aware of the main contemporary scholarly approaches to church history and looks to the Irish material for answers. By combing the 'Lives' of the saints she has revealed many new aspects of the world of the early Irish monk.

It is this attention to detail that saves a book that might otherwise have been a disaster. When I suggested at the beginning that this book was ambitious it is because a more mature scholar, and particularly one who had come through the Irish system rather than the American, would have quaked at the idea of attempting such a book.

Dr Bitel is certain that the world of early Ireland was a monastic world. There is never any questioning of the nature of the early Irish church. She declares (p. 85) that 'While hagiographers used an indiscriminate profusion of terms for monasteries—*eclais*, *domnach*, *tempull*, *reicléis*, *ecclesia*, *cellula*, *oratorium*, *monasterium*, *civitas*—the monasteries of the *vitae* were routinely large and wealthy communities.' This surely begs the question. We are still a long way from fully understanding the exact meaning of these terms, if indeed some of them were ever exact. The word *domnach*, a borrowing from the Latin *dominicum* is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, word for a church. And if we are to associate the bishop with a church then we can associate the earliest bishops with such churches. Many of the *domnach* churches are to be found in areas called *mag* a 'plain', 'long

settled area' or associated with population groups, emphasising the pastoral role of the bishop in the earliest church. By beginning her survey in 800 Dr Bitel clearly believes that the bishop has been subsumed within the monastic organization. Indeed although she is aware of the variety of churches they are ultimately all monastic: 'The hagiographers wrote for and about the most successful monastic communities, and hardly admitted the existence of small hermitages, oratories, tiny shrines operated privately by family groups, and episcopal sites. By neglecting to describe other kinds of religious settlements, hagiographers suggested a false uniformity in the appearance and function of all monasteries. In reality, monastic settlements differed according to location, available resources, size and status, and function.' (p. 58)

Even if we accept the concept of a 'monastic world', there is still the problem of the sources that describe it. One of the difficulties about the 'Lives' of the saints lies in their timelessness. One can be lulled into a sense of the medieval world as a period in which change took place so slowly that a source of the ninth century will still be valid in the twelfth. There can be no denying that this can sometimes be the case—but it is a case that has to be proven. Just as the archaeologist is constantly aware of the stratification (or lack of it) of his dig, or more often, the difficulty of deciding just what the stratification is, so too the historian is confronted by sources that present the same difficulties of stratification. Annals, 'Lives' of the saints, law-tracts have come down to us after centuries of copying, interpolation and editorial emendation. Getting back to the 'original' text is only one aspect of the problem. When later additions or emendations have been identified they are not necessarily to be cast aside, for they often tell us much about the intention of the writer and the conditions of his time. It is precisely this kind of painstaking discovery that provides us with a chronological framework and allows what at first seemed like an incidental aside to assume a depth and subtly.

It is in this area that the fundamental weakness of this book lies. Each saint's 'Life' floats in a vague chronology until a history of the church that produced it is constructed. It is really only then that the various episodes can be assigned to a stratification. For many of the 'Lives' the result would be a book of similar length to this one. Only a few studies have been completed on individual 'Lives' that have approached them in this way. Dr Bitel's book is premature, but it has the merit of focusing attention on what has yet to be done.

It is so difficult to conceive of the early Irish world. Despite our sagas, law-tracts, annals, poetry, biblical exegesis, canon law, grammars and a whole range of other sources, what do we really understand of pre-Norman Ireland? Can we ever get close to the mentality of the early Irish? Dr Bitel constantly uses the concept of the sacred enclosure within and the profane world without. These concepts are not new, nor were they when I used them as part of the explanation of the monastic town some years ago. More and more historians are trying to get inside the skin of early societies. The sheer difficulty of doing so for periods so close to our own that we can still talk to people who were alive at the time can put us in awe of ever getting back to early Ireland. I am thinking here of Margaret J. Wiener's *Visible and Invisible Realms: Power, Magic and Colonial Conquest in Bali* (1995) and James S. Duncan's *The City as Text: The Politics of landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (1990). The ritual landscape is something that looms large with archaeologists today. The journal *Emania* is to the forefront in this area and the recent book by N.B. Aitchison, *Armagh and the Royal Centres in Early Medieval Ireland. Monuments, Cosmology, and the Past*, also addresses this problem. And this is one of Dr Bitel's main concerns—the relationship between the monks within and the secular world without. How much do we see of the secular world?

Dr Bitel discusses the Christian reorganisation of the landscape. (p. 48 f.) In particular she stresses the attitude of the Church to prehistoric monuments and how these were Christianised as shrines or places of pilgrimage. This is a rather loose discussion. Perhaps one of the main concerns of the converted Irish, and one that has been echoed among converted people in recent times, is the problem of

ancestors. We converts may have been saved, but what about our fathers? Are they to suffer eternal damnation? The Christianisation of prehistoric graves, more particularly recent Iron Age barrows, may have been an attempt to resolve this issue, especially those monuments that contained the bones of the founder of the dynasty.

In chapter I, Dr Bitel makes a distinction between settled areas and the forest and waste. It presents a depressing picture heightened by the demons and outlaws that lurked there, as seen through the eyes of the hagiographer. And the image of constant rain and wet may reflect something of her own impressions on her visits to the country. This picture is so generalised that it is a truism. As a result of 'lack of agricultural technology' (p. 20) and the climate, Ireland was always on the verge of famine. 'The desperation of the monks in the *vita* might be dismissed as hagiographic exaggeration, but the annals corroborate the hungry image of early Ireland.' (p. 26)

The citations in the annals are mentioned because they are the exception not the rule. Again, one cannot help feeling that the evidence of the annals should be taken first and the hagiographical accounts read against them. What was the point of such statements by the hagiographer? To which period does the incident refer—the ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth centuries? It is a commonplace for the archaeologist to tell us about the predominance of cattle bones on sites. Cattle bones dominate those of other animals. But what is the relationship between the consumption of meat and grain? How many of the sites were royal sites where there was lavish entertainment, where one would expect great mounds of cattle bones? Between the tenth and the twelfth centuries there is an increasing number of references to the destruction of corn as a result of weather or action in warfare. Does this reflect a change in the structure of society? Dr Bitel has not had the chance to see the results of the research of Niall Brady on the plough. This suggests that the heavy plough came into Ireland in the tenth century—not the fourth (p. 24). The perceived 'lack of technology', therefore, was not unique to Ireland. The new technology is also to be associated with a major change in the structure of society. Is there an earlier and later stratification in the hagiography that reflects this change? This is an important question.

'The *desert* (wasteland) of the saints was rarely far from clustered settlements, called *clachans*, or the ring-forts of single families, called *ráths*.' (p. 37) The hoary *clachan* appears, but without any supporting evidence. And related to this is reference to *villae* in the 'Life' of Gerald of Mayo of the Saxons. The *villa* here is almost certainly the *baile* unit and, therefore, pace Dr Bitel, was very likely pre-Norman. What exactly is the *desert*? Does its meaning change over time? There is a reluctance to engage in such discussion.

Here again, as with the terminology of churches, we are faced with fundamental problems. What is a monk? Dr Bitel has difficulty in reconciling the legal sources with the hagiographical. She comes to the conclusion that a 'monk was not a *manach*. *Manaig* were farmers, clients and tenants of the monastic family.' (p. 117) But surely the monastic *familia* included all those who belonged to the saint? The real problem is who constituted the real monks, that is who lived under the strict rule at any given time? Dr Bitel sees the *suburbana* that surrounded the monastic settlement as the area in which the secular labourers lived, while within the enclosure the priests and their *familiae* resided (p. 123). Such distinctions became greatly eroded as time went on. When we look at the reference in the *Liber Angeli* to 'Christians of both sexes are seen to live together in religion from the coming of the faith to the present day almost inseparably, and to this aforesaid (city) also adhere three orders: virgins and penitents, and those serving the church in legitimate matrimony.' By about 640, when this text was most likely to have been composed, it is clear that Armagh had a mixed population of laity and clergy served by a northern and a southern church. The monastic element was only one part of it. This church settlement was evolving in the direction of a town, if it had not, in fact, the main characteristics already by then. But here again, Dr Bitel does not really address the changing aspect of early churches dominated as

her thought is by the concept of the monastery.

On occasion Dr Bitel is aware of the political significance of some of the episodes, but does not have sufficient historical background to grasp the point. There is sufficient genealogical information to suggest that the monastery of Aghowle in Co Wicklow was staffed by the members of the Uí Felmedha dynasty since the late eighth century, when it came under Leinster control. It was clearly under the sphere of influence of Diarmait Mac Mael-na-mBó in the eleventh century. In fact, it is this very motif that allows us to date this edition of the 'Life' of Finnian to Diarmait's reign.

The reference to the billeting of troops on Drumlane by Ua Ruairc in the 'Life' of Máedóg (p. 200) refers to the attempt of the Church in the twelfth century to be free of secular impositions. Frequently it was not the right to billet troops, but the abuse of the right that caused the ire of the Church throughout the centuries.

There are a few further points. Dr Bitel suggests that churches like cemeteries remained closed to the laity and refers to the size of churches as preventing lay people from attending the services (p. 71). This, of course, is at odds with the evidence of the 'Life' of Brigit by Cogitosus and that of the *Liber Angeli* that I referred to above. Churches were sufficiently large to hold hundreds during the Viking period when many were captured while taking refuge within them.

Dr Bitel suggests that churches were placed in the centre of the *platea* in later settlements (p. 76). I do not understand how she arrives at this conclusion. Churches were frequently rebuilt on the same site. Indeed, new churches of the twelfth century were often built at some distance from the core of the site, doubtless to get away from the bustle of a secularised site.

'While historians have noted the monks' use of kinship vocabulary to describe their communities, none has understood just how thoroughly the monks adopted the kinship model.' (p. 86). There is some truth in this, and Dr Bitel has some interesting points to make.

There are many careless and imprecise references. A few will indicate their nature. There is a complete misunderstanding of Muirchú's text (p. 60). The Airgailla are not, of course, associated with Dún Lethglas. The *Liber Angeli* is to be dated to the seventh century, not the ninth (p. 81). Columcille was met by monks who were working outside the vallum at Clonmacnoise, not at Durrow (p. 91, 203-4). The reference (p. 159) to the consecration of Aed Oirdnide in 993 is a misreading of F.J. Byrne's book (p. 256). Aed died in 819 and was king of Tara not Cruachan. The maps also have strange omissions and other errors.

In all Dr Bitel's work is frustrating. It is unfortunate that Dr Bitel's book was not revised before it was reprinted by Cork University Press. But she has gone where angels fear to tread. She has thrown up so many points that require further clarification. Indeed, many of the points could constitute the focus for theses and this book could be recommended to those considering post-graduate studies as a quarry for ideas. Those of us in the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement could very well approach this book in the same spirit. It presents us with a challenge to investigate and clarify. Despite its many shortcomings, Dr Bitel is to be congratulated on her foray into the realm of the early Irish monk.

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EARLY MEDIEVAL IRELAND 400—1200.
by Dáibhí ó Cróinín
Longman 1995 379 pp. £15.99 Stg.
ISBN: 0 582 01565 0

This is a note to bring this book to the attention of our Group. This is the most recent survey of early Irish history by a young scholar who has specialized in the earlier period of early Irish history. He begins with the coming of Christianity and ends in 1200, just after the completion of the initial phase of Norman activity in Ireland. Of particular importance to the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement is that Dr ó Cróinín has extensive chapters on land, settlement and the economy; law, family and the community.

It is clear from the list of contents that much space is given to Dr ó Cróinín's own area of expertise in those areas of manuscript production, palaeography and the Latin schools. He has also dealt extensively with the Irish scholars on the Continent. Such a survey will be very welcome. Out of the ten chapters the first eight deal with the period up to approximately 800, whereas the ninth to twelfth centuries are compressed into the final two. There is a distinct imbalance in coverage. This is perhaps to emphasize that much work has yet to be done on the period between the tenth and the twelfth centuries. However, a proper appraisal will have to await a full review. Whatever the outcome of such a review, the quality of Dr ó Cróinín's previous work assures us of a thought-provoking and lively survey of the period.

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IRISH CITIES.
Edited by Howard B. Clarke, Mercier Press,
1995, 192pp, IR£9.99, ISBN 1-85635-127-0

If only the Thomas Davis Lecture Series on Irish cities could be heard outside Ireland, but never mind, at least it is now possible for those of us 'over the water' and out-of-range of RTE broadcasts to read about eight of Ireland's historic cities in this excellent publication, edited by Dr Howard Clarke. *Irish Cities* follows the same style and format as the preceding *Irish Country Towns*, also broadcast as a lecture series, and, as with this earlier collection of essays (edited by Professor Simms and Professor Andrews), Dr Clarke has brought together a series of readable, interesting and informed accounts of individual urban histories. In the case of *Irish Cities*, the complexity of these urban histories has meant different contributors covering different periods of any one city's development. This works very well, allowing the inquiring reader to scan relevant chapters either geographically or chronologically. *Irish Cities* is, therefore, of more than interest; it provides an accessible collection of current work on Ireland's historic cities.

The book is arranged in alphabetical order, city by city, starting with Belfast, and it covers Cork, Derry, Dublin, Galway, Kilkenny, Limerick and Waterford. For each of these eight cities, the essays begin with the earliest signs of evidence for urban activity, usually dating from the early medieval period, and they close with the late-twentieth century. With such a broad temporal spread, one would expect superficial coverage, but this is not the case. Instead, for the eight cities there is a concise narrative, interwoven using a variety of historical approaches which is the hallmark of settlement studies in Ireland. Thus, information is drawn from recent archaeological work, literary sources and urban topography, as well as from conventional written records of urban history. This is particularly noticeable in the essays on medieval cities, especially Dublin (by Dr Clarke), Kilkenny (by Mr Bradley) and Waterford (by Dr Barry). These all provide

evidence of how the cities grew, topographically, often through stages of controlled town planning. For example, Dr Clarke suggests the regularity in the plan of Oxmantown, one of the medieval suburbs of Dublin, reflects its planned origin; and in the case of Kilkenny, Mr Bradley points out how the 'regularly arranged plots were the backbone of the Anglo-Norman town plan'. There is written evidence for this episode of town-planning. In a charter belonging to William Marshall, of 1207, it was stated that the size of plots in Kilkenny should all be laid out with 20 feet widths (although there is no mention that this standard plot-size was actually adhered to!). Indeed, the theme of town planning can be traced through all the essays on Irish cities, including those on post-medieval cities, for examples, Belfast and Derry, as well those relating to urban growth in the twentieth century. The organisation of urban space in Irish cities is connected to wider socio-political processes, and in this respect in all of the contributions there is a strong message on how the urban past shapes the present.

But *Irish Cities* is not just about the physical urban landscape, it is about citizens and communities living in each of the eight cities throughout past centuries. In his introduction, Dr Clarke emphasises the importance of citizenship in qualifying the status of a city, and in the essays the qualities of these citizens emerges in the shaping of their built environments. However, there are also signs of social disharmony in the built environment of Irish cities, and this is reflected in the ways that urban space was ordered. For example, Dr Barry comments on the expulsion of Hiberno-Norse inhabitants from their walled city of Waterford by the actions of new Anglo-Norman elites. This was a politicised process, acted out so as to physically and socially marginalise the Ostmen of Waterford. This act was then internalised by the new authority of the Anglo-Normans. In Dr Clarke's essay, a similar dislocation can be seen to have occurred in Dublin during the late-twelfth century, when under the encouragement of Henry II, King of England, 'discontented and disloyal Hiberno-Norse were banished to the little north-side suburb [that] was to acquire the name Ostmantown (later Oxmantown)'. In both of these cases, the vulnerability of the medieval suburbs to attack by war and disease is also brought out, and at Cork, too, Mr Hurley comments on how 'throughout their history the suburbs bore the brunt of whatever misfortunes befell Cork'. In the Irish medieval city, then, suburbs were clearly seen by the citizens as places of social exclusion and in this respect parallels can be drawn with suburban areas of other cities across medieval Europe. Also to be seen is the way in which the urban landscape of medieval cities in Ireland was manipulated by and for English colonisation, and how the built environment of these cities represents a social and political response in the desire by English elites to control the activities of communities living in Irish cities.

The idea of social dislocation through spatial marginalisation is inherent in the suburban expansion of Irish cities in other periods of history. For example, it is evident in the early-twentieth century development of Dublin, which is covered in Dr Prunty's fascinating essay, where although re-location 'to the unknown wilds of Cabra and Crumlin' was resisted by some residents of Dublin's inner urban communities, they were nonetheless 'brushed aside' by civic authorities. The same reluctance to move away from city centres is noted by Dr Cronin in the case of Cork, because rents in the new red-brick suburbs were so much higher. Both of these examples can usefully be compared to the resistance noted by George Orwell in the suburbanisation of working class communities in England in the 1920s and 1930s. But suburbanisation and spatial marginalisation could also entail a shift in prosperity, and this occurred where newly developed suburbs took the commercial focus of a city away from the area of an earlier urban core. As essays by Dr Cronin and Professor Cullen demonstrate, this can be seen in eighteenth-century Cork and Dublin through the planned development of new streets, and symbolised also by the introduction of new architectural forms. Again, such re-ordering of the built environment may be seen as part of a politicised process, established through the actions of civic and aristocratic elites to achieve social dominance and political stability.

The stories of *Irish Cities* therefore relate to wider issues, on aspects of both Irish scholarship and citizenship. Dr Clarke makes what appears to be an apology in his editorial about the way in which the 'essays are illustrative rather than analytical', and yet what emerges through reading *Irish Cities* is more than just summary descriptive accounts of individual cities. Taken together, the essays define what is special about Irish cities and what makes each of the eight cities special. The essence of urban communities can be studied, spatially and temporally, and their relationship in the formation of Ireland understood. This is done by the book's contributors in a way that is meaningful and personal, but not fanciful. It is an approach that will make *Irish Cities* accessible to the tourist gaze. In this context, the illustrative nature of the essays is attractive, not only through the pictures painted by each of the essays, but also by the maps, plans and aerial photographs which complement most of the essay texts. The quality of reproduction is on the whole good, but the addition of more topographical detail on some of the plans may have been helpful; particularly for those readers using the book as a guide to the cities. It is a shame, therefore, that the essays on both Galway and Kilkenny lack plans, and that the extract of the Ordnance Survey six inch map of Derry is rather too small to be useful. However, considering the limitations of page size (which actually makes the book a handy size for travelling), most of the illustrative material is put to good use.

For those who are not going to use *Irish Cities* as an excursion guide there is much to commend the book as a way of exploring the urbanisation of Ireland. Quite apart from the local issues raised in each of the essays, the collection as a whole will appeal to those interested in general aspects of Irish urban geography, history and archaeology. It is a book that should be in every library, for it offers an excellent introduction to historic cities in Ireland. Each of the essays is supported by individual bibliographies. Taken together, these 'select' bibliographies actually form quite an extensive list of additional reading material and so themselves provide a valuable resource for studying Irish historic settlements. This learned feel of *Irish Cities* is matched by its rather scholarly price-tag just short of £10. While the book is certainly good value for money, this price may not make the book appeal to as many as it ought, particularly in the tourist market. Nevertheless, the book is professionally produced, attractive and readable, and it offers the additional advantage for those of us who did not hear the lectures in the Thomas Davis series (and perhaps some of those that did) to catch up on some essential extra reading on Irish cities.

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SHAPING A CITY:
Belfast in the late twentieth century.
by F. W. Boal 127 pp £10.00 Stg.
Belfast, Institute of Irish Studies, 1995.
ISBN 0 85389 605 4.

While Belfast remains one of the most intensively studied cities in Europe, this volume is a welcome and justified addition to that body of material. Written in collaboration with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive - the public-sector housing authority - by one of the city's most distinguished geographers, the book was published to coincide with the Congress of the International Federation for Housing and Planning which was held in Belfast during September 1995. Professor Boal discusses the city's trauma and re-birth during the past three turbulent decades, examining population change and ethno-religious geography, planning priorities, housing, employment patterns and the urban environment. These contemporary concerns are placed within a necessarily brief historical context, although the latter has been well rehearsed elsewhere. The book is superbly - indeed lavishly - illustrated by an

array of graphs, maps and, above all, a photographic montage that pays due homage to Belfast's evocative setting between lough, hills and the ever-present scarp of the Antrim Plateau that fills so many of the city's vistas.

Although it might conflict with many people's perceptions of the city, the story that emerges here is an optimistic one, Belfast being reshaped into a more humane and viable environment despite - or indeed to spite - the decades of conflict and the vicissitudes of peripherality in a globalising economy. But what precisely is Belfast and where is it? Professor Boal erects a four-tier model that differentiates between an inner and core city (with a combined population of around 280,000) and the Belfast Urban Area (BUA) and even larger Belfast Regional City. The BUA, stretching from Carrickfergus in the north and Holywood in the east along the Lagan Valley to Lisburn, houses almost 500,000 people, while no less than 50 per cent of Northern Ireland's population live in the regional city. This latter, a discontinuously urbanised region, tied to the traditional city by being within its heavily travelled commuter zone, encompasses virtually all the area directly east of Lough Neagh.

In contradistinction to the social turmoil and physical damage of the past 25 years, Professor Boal identifies three major processes that are contributing to the revitalisation of the city's fortunes. In the mid-1970s, housing conditions in Belfast were among the worst in western Europe and certainly inferior to every other major city in the United Kingdom. Subsequently, a massive public-sector initiative of new building and rehabilitation has transformed the inner city's housing stock. Secondly, the historically ambiguous relationship between Belfast and the River Lagan is being addressed by Laganside Corporation, charged with the dramatic re-shaping of the city's river frontages inland of the port. Finally, despite the destruction, damage and population decline, there is the on-going revitalisation of the retailing and commercial life of the city centre. Arguably, this reconstruction of the 'neutral territory at the heart of ethnic fragmentation' is the most potent and symbolic manifestation of the city's re-birth.

None the less, ethno-religious segregation remains central to an understanding of Belfast's social geography. If less dramatically so than Derry, it remains a city divided by its river. To the west, 55 per cent of the core city's population is Catholic, compared to only 12 per cent in the east. Boal attributes the origins of this distinctive patterning to the tensions emanating from the late nineteenth-century expansion of the city's population. In explanation, which could well have benefitted from some consideration of the wider Irish socio-political environment of this period, he adopts A. C. Hepburn's somewhat inelegantly labelled 'segregation ratchet' model. This argues that each period of hostility created conditions for higher segregation levels, then serving in turn as the basis for even further segregation during the next cycle of conflict. The events of the past three decades have hardened the ethno-religious patterning - although not uniformly across the socio-economic classes, segregation being particularly sharp in working class areas. In addition, while all parts of the core city experienced large scale population loss during the 1970s, the decline was significantly greater in Protestant areas.

Given the inevitable continuity of these rigid sectarian divisions, much of the book is concerned with the plans addressing the physical transformation of the urban environment. These have had to reconcile the continuing tension between the potentially negative effects of growth in the BUA upon the many small towns of Northern Ireland and the need to reinvigorate a city that was haemorrhaging population - especially the middle classes - during the 1970s and 80s. The former priority dominated the thinking behind the 1964 Matthew Plan which delimited a stop-line to restrict Belfast's growth. But the demographic, economic and ethnic shock-waves of the 1970s combined a thinning of the population and high unemployment with conflict. Thus, the most recent scheme, *The Belfast Urban Area Plan 2001*, regards the stop-line as a more flexible

instrument for the controlled release of urban edge land. Less charitably, it could be described as a licence for the private-sector speculators who have ravaged the southern approaches to the city. Indeed, while Professor Boal goes on to chart the revolution in public sector housing - notably the abandonment of the deck access flats of the 1960s in favour of a return to traditional terraces - the role of the private sector is rather neglected, a reflection perhaps of the book's genesis. While the plans for the river - Port, Liganside and the Lagan Regional Park - are examined in detail, the book is less than convincing in its discussion of the sustainability of a transport strategy that is heavily reliant on the private car. Nor does it address the major tensions emanating from the 'flexibility' of contemporary housing planning and the failure to provide a transport plan commensurate with the city's recent expansion.

The absence of an overtly critical dimension constitutes what is perhaps the only flaw in an otherwise attractive and useful volume which I can recommend to anyone interested in the fortitude of the island's second city and its revitalisation in the face of economic depression and ethno-religious conflict. The book's strength lies in the coherence, economy and presentation of Professor Boal's text, married with the excellent graphics. But one is left just a little wary of its optimism. For all the physical evidence of revitalisation, to 'tap the cultural diversity of the city as an asset rather than manage it as a liability' does seem to under-estimate the depressing strength and endurance of Belfast's ethno-religious conflict.

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**PROTESTANT DISSENT AND
CONTROVERSY IN IRELAND,**
Phil Kilroy, Cork University Press, 1994.
300 pp IR£25 hb. ISBN 1 85918 003 5

Until relatively recently writing about the history of the church in Ireland took the form of dutiful chronologies of individual denominations or even particular parishes or churches. Beginning with innovative writings of John Bossy and Patrick J. Corish, this blinkered approach has begun to give way to studies of people or communities within confessional allegiances. This study takes the process one stage further and examines not one denomination but a number whose commonality derived from their brand of protestantism which was not that of the established Church of Ireland. Presbyterians of various hues, Quakers and Independents, most of whom had come to Ireland under the liberal religious regime and attractive economic incentives which characterised the 1650s, are the focus of this book.

The book itself is arranged in three parts. The first provides an excellent overview of how each denominational group saw itself. Here there is interesting material on the origins, numbers and geography of each grouping and their organisation and theology. For those not familiar with the ideas and organisation of dissent, this section provides a reliable and magisterial introduction, not only to the seventeenth century realities but also to the surviving archival material. The remaining two sections of the book are concerned with the conceptually difficult issue of establishing whether or not a dissenting identity really existed. One approach is considered in the second part of the book which deals with disputes within and between dissenting sects. These disputes, mainly of a theological nature, are examined through the much under used pamphlet literature which survives from the late seventeenth century. A second approach to defining the idea of dissent is to examine the disputes of the dissenting sects with the established church, both as an institution and through its secular arm, the Dublin government. This forms the basis for the third and final section of the book.

The picture which emerges from this murky world of theological intrigue is one of hitherto unexpected complexity. Those who joined together to oppose the liturgical arrangements of the Church of Ireland had problems in agreeing among themselves. Yet, even this generalisation is too simplistic. The origins of dissent in immigration meant that denomination labels meant different things to different people. Presbyterians from the southern part of Ireland came from an English tradition which saw their church as separated from the established church and, hence, had much in common with other separatist groups, such as Independents. They shared a Calvinist theology, a similar system of church government and some inter-communion in the Dublin churches. These were, in a real sense, dissenters. The Ulster Presbyterians, on the other hand, came from a world where theirs was the established church *de facto* and, after 1690 *de jure* also. Consequently they would have little truck with Independency. They did not reject the principle of an established church, but only refused to conform to the church as then established: in short non-conformists. As a result there developed two systems of Presbyterianism in Ireland. If this appears complex, Dr Kilroy's picture becomes even more nuanced with the introduction of the Quakers. If Presbyterians might fight among themselves they would certainly join together to oppose what they saw as the heretic doctrines of Quakerism with its 'inner light' as the guiding point of faith.

Dr Kilroy's analysis is a masterly demonstration of how the generalised terminology of historians and theologians falls down under close examination. If dissent, defined as Protestants who did not conform to the established church, seems an easy and useful categorisation it can also be a highly misleading one. Such a deconstruction begs a whole series of other questions. The main evidence on which this work rests is formal religious controversy expressed in pamphlet debate. This evidence was generated by the clerical elite who were professionally interested in the theological matters they discussed. The laity find little place in this work. The argument could be tested on a wider range of themes which had more relevance to lay men and women. How, for example, did the differences and similarities within dissent reflect themselves in the wider areas of liturgy and lay belief? To answer this sort of question would require another book rather different to that which has been written. As Dr Kilroy has clearly shown in her bibliography, the evidence survives and requires only an historian with enough imagination to interpret it.

This is an important book which opens up a large terrain of uncharted territory for those interested in early modern Ireland. Its consummate mastery of the source material, combined with its clear exposition, makes it a landmark work which is unlikely to be superseded in the foreseeable future. It will provide a guide, but also a warning, for those who would be content with bland generalisation about those who lived in the complex world of Ireland in the seventeenth century.

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ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE
MAYNOOTH

Colony and Frontier in Medieval Ireland

Essays Presented to

J.F. Lydon

Edited by T. B. Barry,

Robin Frame and Katharine Simms

Hambledon Press

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All IR£4.95 each pb.

NO.1, PAUL CONNELL, PARSON,
PRIEST AND MASTER: National Education in
Co. Meath, 1824-41. 66pp ISBN 0-7165-2570-4

NO.2, DENNIS A. CRONIN, A GALWAY
GENTLEMAN IN THE AGE OF
IMPROVEMENT: Robert French of Monivea,
1716-79. 58pp ISBN 0-7165-2572-0.

NO.3, BRIAN Ó DALAIGH,
ENNIS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: Portrait
of an Urban Community. 62pp.
ISBN 0-7165-2571-20.

NO.4, SEAMAS O MAITIÚ, THE HUMOURS
OF DONNYBROOK: Dublin's Famous Fair and its
Suppression. 56pp.
ISBN 0-7165-2569-0.

It is a pleasure to welcome the appearance in print of four edited and revised Master of Arts thesis in Local History all originating from St Patrick's College, Maynooth, County Kildare. Each of these attractively and economically produced essays is enhanced by an appealing front cover illustration. Each offering consists of sixty odd pages of text and without exception they are devoted to the elucidation of mainly eighteenth century themes of change in place-specific contexts.

It is all the more apposite and coincidental that the first handbook in the series is dedicated to an analysis of educational change in county Meath between 1824 and 1841 and it is aptly entitled Parson, Priest and Master. In fact, it might have been better to reverse the order of offices in the title as it was during this period that sectarian education in Ireland became institutionalized. Besides a short introduction and an even terser conclusion there are only two substantive chapters. The insertion of at least subheadings, some might argue, would help to navigate the reader through an interesting, original but sometimes dense narrative.

The first chapter presents a lively survey of education in county Meath and it is followed by a specific analysis of the "National school system in the county". The author must be commended for taking a countywide perspective to address educational change as too often an in depth local study can be so local as to emasculate its own rationale. By extending the scale, or the timeframe, of such a study the opposite may happen and the context, in this case county Meath, may unwittingly emerge as an amorphous entity which masks deeply etched social differences expressed even in rural and urban distinctions. Still, Connell successfully demonstrates that pre-nineteenth century schooling conditions were appalling and these were exacerbated by poverty and sectarianism. Inter-county distinctions in access to education must have been reinforced by deprivation and disadvantage but they appear to have been hardly compromised by creed. It is also worth noting that there were many mixed centres and a whopping 90 plus per cent were "pay-schools" in spite of the fact that the physical conditions of the locales for the schools left much to be desired. To be fair to the author of this valuable essay, a productive attempt is made to highlight but not to adequately explain within-the-county variations, on a barony basis, of such fundamental issues as pupil enrolment. Also investigated are teachers remuneration and even the quality of teaching.

The remainder of the work is devoted to a searching consideration of the development of the national school system within the county in the decade after 1831. The idiosyncrasies and the inequities associated with the prevailing educational context in Ireland prompted the House of Commons to formulate and subsequently implement new educational departures in Ireland in the 1830s and some of these initiatives were ultimately to crystallise in what Connell labels as the *National School System*. Despite a noticeable increase in enrolment, an incredible eighty per cent of children of school-going age remained

outside the system. Such an elevated number of disenfranchised should not surprise us because no government, agency or institution could respond immediately to the unprecedented demands for education and all the infrastructural costs total provision would entail. At this juncture this reviewer must succumb to some geographical fastidiousness! The figures which accompany this chapter and which depict the changing incidence of schools only appear to locate institutions within their respective barony boundaries rather than in their precise locations. Also more information would be welcome, expressed graphically, or in the text, regarding urban and rural distinctions in school provision.

In his conclusion the author tantalisingly asserts that the "better-off" areas of the county drew the immediate benefits from the new system because "they could afford...the local contribution". This is surely a clarion call for more research and it rounds off a sound leader presentation in the series of Maynooth Studies in Local History.

A famous but under-researched improver, Robert French of Monivea county Galway, is the focus of the second volume in the series. Authored by Dennis A. Cronin the objective of the work is "to discuss the impact of one such man on the communities within which he moved, especially in the local world of the landed estate and parish" ... and ... "it is hoped that a coherent picture will emerge of a Galway country gentleman's relationship with his physical, social and political environment". The context is the life of French between 1716 and 1779. French is regarded as a kind of "broker figure" who acted both as a bridge and a go-between linking his locality and its residents with the wider world. A rich, varied but incomplete, and largely untapped by research, collection of French estate and personal papers constitute the principal source materials employed in this valuable, painstaking and attractive study.

A crisp introduction traces the beginnings and the consolidation of the French connection with Monivea in county Galway, since the early 1600s. Monivea's context is that of a well recognised "pays" according to the writer, which is defined by the incidence of lowland limestone and abundant glacial deposits which often provide considerable agricultural potential reflected in the lush grasslands which extend from Lough Corrib to the Shannon in south county Roscommon. Favourable economic circumstances, attested to in this area by a frenetic period of market and fair foundation, in the early 1600s encouraged some opulent Galway merchants to invest in landed property and the French's were an exemplar of this trend. In concert with other Galway families they purchased several denominations called "castle towns", chiefly to the east of the town of Galway.

The three remaining chapters are devoted to a thematic analysis of the activities of Robert French at and beyond Monivea and are namely; the management of the estate, his work at Monivea village and the political career of this exceptional man. A modest estate of c.4500 acres was the fulcrum of his existence, the cornerstone of his influence and power. His economic circumstances were underwritten by an improved area which amounted to only a third of his lands. In essence, Robert French was an extremely practical man; he was what has become to be known as an intrusive improver where benevolence and philanthropy were balanced by shrewd fiscal rectitude. This may help to explain his policy of successfully consolidating his leaseholds to larger units and these designs were also facilitated by the natural calamities of the early 1740s. Partnership leases, the author interestingly notes, were taken up by several "villages" almost exclusively on the most improved lands. By 1770 French had amalgamated two-thirds of his leaseholds into medium sized units whose median extent was three hundred acres and most of which were coincident with entire townlands. One thousand acres remained in partnership leaseholds. But, in spite of French's efforts, it is evident that subletting was commonplace not-

withstanding the almost total silence of the leading sources but this practice is confirmed, later in the century, by the landlords' efforts to deal directly with many undertenants.

The author courageously contends that the results of French's unremitting efforts changed the "landscape of Monivea" by introducing many improvements. One is left wondering whether French's achievements were so pervasive; undoubtedly certain sections of society benefited from social and economic improvement and this was due, in part, to circumstances outside French's control. It could also be argued that the long term material landscape transformation was ephemeral; the charter school, the demesne, the linen manufactory and the village of Monivea were all, soon after French's death, to become relics rather than structures upon which further progress could be achieved. A useful chapter on the landlords' political career rounds off this thought-provoking study.

Historical geographers, amongst others, will find Brian Ó'Dalaigh's study of eighteenth century Ennis, county Clare, a worthwhile and serviceable work. Three principal themes are employed by the author to cut into the intricacies of this urban centre. They are namely, topography, physical fabric and, strangely, communications; population and social structure and finally local government and economy. This reviewer takes some exception to the opening sentence in the introduction which proclaims that "the study of urban communities has received little attention in historical writing". One need only mention the comprehensive work by Patrick O'Conner on Clare's sister county, Limerick. Here may indeed be the place to declare again that the bedrock of local and regional studies must surely be expressed within at least an islandwide comparative framework; otherwise there is always the lurking danger of being smothered by particularity. O'Dalaigh's study is a vital one, not simply because it meticulously charts the transition between village and town in Ennis, but it also delineates progression from old to embryonically modern in an urban context in a county with a very tenuous urban tradition. Fortunately, this author is well served by a comprehensive range of mainly primary source materials which heretofore have rarely been cited in published scholarship. The Thomond and the Inchiquin papers, the corporate records of the town and several local newspapers add up to an impressive battery of armoury for any scholar.

A businesslike recitation of antecedent seventeenth century conditions in the introduction sets the scene for this incisive study. The insertion of a copy of a section of a modern one inch to-the-mile map would have, no doubt, reinforced the authors' efforts to contextualise the 'topography' of the town. Instead there is a copy of an interesting but uncited map of Ennis, c.1800, in which only a selection of the features mentioned in the text are named. Without appearing to quibble, the term hinterland is employed with a degree of gay abandon as the author appears to suggest that this word conjures up the immediate surroundings of the town.

Thomas Moland's impressionistic 1703 map provides a convenient terminus to launch into a substantive analysis of change in the settlement. Dexterously navigating through the copious sources the author examines the varied expressions of expansion and change in the physical fabric of Ennis in the eighteenth century, but he does not isolate and recognise bursts of development. The importance of water transport for goods in the early part of the century is stressed and the growth of the centres' postal service is cited as a novel indicator of progress. The chaotic appearance of the settlement is adduced as the result of spontaneous evolution and the inactivity or lack of involvement of the towns principal landed patrons, the Thomonds.

The elaboration of a verifiable demographic profile for eighteenth century Ennis is dogged by inconsistent and incomplete sources. Population growth was however explosive as in many other centres, but, judged on the experience of elsewhere, much of the expansion

was telescoped into the last quarter of the eighteenth century. An eight-fold population increase was notched up, but this must be viewed in the context of a county whose urban thresholds were more than modest. Again, as in so many other centres, immigration was a critical engine of growth and Ó Dalaigh confirms that skilled, educated entrepreneurial people could be counted in the newcomer group and, although numerically insignificant, we are dealing mainly with inter-urban migrants. A detailed investigation of some trade directories and wills permits a general reconstruction of the towns social structure and, by implication, its class fractions.

At the top of the social plinth were the patrons, the Thomonds. Many of their properties were let on long term leases and, it is contended, this practice facilitated the emergence of a class of middlemen - here one wonders is this the most felicitous manner to categorise such a group in an Irish urban context?. This accomplished work is concluded by a consideration of the agencies of local government, their composition and an examination of the economic foundations of the town.

S.Ó Maitiu's study of Donnybrook fair completes this quartet of Maynooth Studies in Local History. In some respect this work could be regarded as less analytical in this tranche of works. Its purpose is stated as follows... "to examine eye witness reports of Donnybrook fair in the nineteenth century to see to what extent (the main elements of carnivalesque) were to be found among the pleasure seekers of the fair green (p.15). The equation of Donnybrook fair with the carnival of southern Europe may not be the most appropriate comparison. The now rather genteel Feria at Seville might be nearer the mark. Indeed all human life was there, at least in its heyday: it attracted people from all sections of society. But it was more than a mere social event, horses were traded, shows and plays were performed, even, later on, boxing appeared as a spectacle besides many other expressions of popular culture. A combination of circumstances in the nineteenth century conspired to ultimately extirpate this event whose reputation had attracted national notoriety. The expansion of suburbia to the fair green, the temperance movement and a growing expectation of gentility combined to stifle and finally quench a most unusual fair in 1866.

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REPRESENTING IRELAND: literature and the origins of conflict, 1534-1660.

Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley (eds), Cambridge, 1993, xxiv, 235pp. £35stg. ISBN 0521416345

The close connection between politics and literature in the early modern period has recently attracted the attention of historians of early modern Ireland. In this varied collection of essays, the colonial relationship between Ireland and England is explored through the literary, historical and political writings of some of the best known early modern writers on Ireland. The principal emphasis is on representations of Ireland in the writings of English commentators, most notably Edmund Spenser, but also John Bale, John Milton and Barnaby Rich and Tom Lee. The Old English historian and theologian Geoffrey Keating is also included.

No agreed view emerges from this collection of how Ireland was 'represented' in early modern literature, or of how the divergent representations of Ireland should best be utilised to broaden our understanding of the Irish past. Instead, Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley's introduction notes that 'Ireland was a disputed territory in more ways than one, not simply in terms of litigation, land rights

and settlements, but also in terms of the languages in which it was constructed'. The analysis of this 'disputed territory' offered here is primarily literary, and the perspective is predominantly English. Ireland is presented as 'a variegated text', and the English representations of Ireland are seen as particularly valuable for the light they cast on England and Englishness.

The viewpoints of a few English colonists are explored and it is suggested in Lisa Jardine's essay that individuals like Spenser were concerned that their involvement in the colony brought with it the risk of 'a loss of identity'. She concludes, nevertheless, that Spenser's image of the perfect gentleman abroad, counteracting disorder and evil, was 'a particularly sustaining fiction of the Elizabethan colonial experience in Ireland'. Five of the eleven essays in the volume focus on aspects of Edmund Spenser's writings, particularly *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, (written in 1596 and first published in 1633). Spenser's literary treatment of the colonists' very imperfect understanding of the geography of Ireland is the subject of the essays by D. J. Baker and J. R. Lupton, while John Milton's reading of Spenser in the middle decades of the seventeenth century is the subject of Willy Maley's essay.

The editors' suggestion that Ireland was read as a 'series of negative images of Englishness' is partially substantiated by Andrew Hadfield's assessment of *The Vocacyon of Johan Bale to the Bishoprick of Ossorie*, (1553). Hadfield argues that Bale's equation of Englishness with protestantism, at this early stage in the religious upheavals of the period, paved the way for the later equation of Irishness with Catholicism, as well as influencing the emergence of a protestant identity among the New English in Ireland. This is rather a shallow explanation for the emergence of Irish Catholic identity, which surely owed more to European influence and, particularly, the experience and influence of the Irish in continental colleges from the end of the sixteenth century.

One medieval writer, whose negative image of Ireland did have a lasting influence, was Giraldus Cambrensis. His *Topographica Hibernica* and his *Expugnatio Hibernica*, both written in the 1180s, had a role in establishing 'barbarity' as a dominant cliché in English writing about Ireland. Gillingham shows that one consequence of this was the emergence of a sense of Englishness which was defined by the perceived differences between English and Celtic societies. Giraldus's writings were still current in the early modern period, hence justifying his inclusion here in a collection of essays covering 1534-1660.

It was partly to counteract the negative image of Ireland portrayed by Giraldus Cambrensis, and expounded by other English writers, that the odd-man-out in this collection, Geoffrey Keating, was prompted to write his polemical history, the *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn*, discussed in a substantial chapter by Brendan Bradshaw. An examination of Keating's history reveals that the refutation of criticism by foreigners was only part of his agenda. Bradshaw's sophisticated analysis of *Foras Feasa ar Eirinn* confirms the arguments outlined in recent articles by this reviewer on the significance of Keating's Old English origins and his training as a Counter-Reformation priest for the interpretation of Ireland's past presented in his history. His approach is described as 'blatantly manipulative', not just in the way it asserts Ireland's steadfastness to the Catholic faith since the time of Patrick, but, also, in his claim that Ireland was evangelised, not by monks, but by secular clergy. The history stressed an unbroken continuity between early Irish Christianity and Counter-Reformation Catholicism, which Keating was concerned to promote. That such a perspective was influenced by European trends is not addressed by Bradshaw, who chooses to interpret Keating's political ideology as home grown, despite his prolonged period of study in continental Europe.

Bradshaw takes the analysis of the political functions of Keating's history further than has previously been attempted. It is suggested that through Keating's derogatory account of the Norman invasion,

from which he distances his own ancestors and those of other Old English families, readers were intended to see a parallel to the role of the New English in seventeenth-century Ireland. It is further suggested that the message to those of Keating's contemporaries who were 'struggling to maintain the liberties and privileges of the historic Irish nation' against the oppression of the New English, was that through God's providence they would prevail.

For this reviewer, Hiram Morgan's discussion of Tom Lee's 'A brief declaration of the government of Ireland' (1594), 'The discoverie and recoverie of Ireland with the authors apologie' (1599) and other tracts provides the most satisfying analysis of texts properly contextualised. Denying that such tracts on Ireland were ever intended to have literary merit, or were ever intended for publication, Morgan insists that they must be viewed as political 'position papers'. The story Morgan tells of the life and times of an English soldier cum pamphleteer illustrates that the strategies proposed in such tracts, outlining government corruption, the shortcomings of the Anglo Irish, and the need for martial law 'invariably suited the private advancement of their proponents', and consequently Morgan repeatedly, and rightly, stresses 'the overwhelming need for the context'.

As the contributors to this volume have discovered for themselves, the study of literature emerging from the English colonial experience in Ireland is more useful in illuminating aspects of Englishness than in interpreting early modern Ireland.

A satisfactory analysis of the connection hinted at in the subtitle of this collection: 'literature and the origins of conflict, 1534-1660' will, however, have to be much broader in scope, and take proper account of the literature of the 'colonised' as well as that of the coloniser.

BERNADETTE CUNNINGHAM

NEWSLETTER

THE IRISH STONE AXE PROJECT

Stone axes appear to have been manufactured and used particularly during the Neolithic period, 4000 - 2500 BC, but they were also in use both before and after this date. In Ireland there are at least 20,000 stone axes known, mostly in Irish museums but also in museums in Britain and wider afield. Because of the quantity of these objects they have a great potential for our understanding of Neolithic settlement. In addition they vary in raw material, size, shape and context. For all of these reasons they can greatly enhance our understanding of a number of related aspects of prehistoric society. The term 'stone axe' is used to cover a number of related types of stone artifact; axes, adzes, chisels and wedges and, of course, axes were originally set in wooden handles, which very occasionally are found with axes in bogs. The Irish Stone Axe Project (ISAP) was set up in 1990 by the author and Dr Eoin Grogan to establish a computerised database recording details of all known Irish stone axes in museum collections and private possession. This is to provide the information needed to study the production, distribution, use and deposition of stone axes in a systematic way. The database contains information on the petrology, morphology and context of the axes.

In looking at the range of rock types used to make stone axes a two-tier programme of systematic petrological identification is carried out by the project petrologist, Dr Stephen Mandal. Firstly, a rapid surface identification provides a brief description of the petrography of each axe using a hand lens. This technique is very time efficient and thus is a practical means of dealing initially with such a large number of artefacts. It provides a means by which the axes can be broadly grouped by lithology, and acts as a guideline to approaching more detailed research. Secondly, axes are selectively cored to provide a sample for microscopic petrological examination

and identification and the application of geochemical analyses, such as x-ray diffraction (XRD) and x-ray fluorescence (XRF), to source the rock. Restoration of the axes is carried out by Dr Christina Haywood.

To date we have information on over 16,000 axes on the ISAP database which have been given a surface petrological identification. There was a wide range of rock types used to make stone axes but, surprisingly, over 50% of all the axes are made from one type, porcellanite, a rock that outcrops in two main locations in Co. Antrim, at Tievebullagh near Cushendall and at Brockley on Rathlin Island. While the greatest number of porcellanite axes occurs in the north-east of Ireland, they were used throughout Ireland and significant numbers were carried to Britain where they have been found from Kent to the Shetlands. A further 25 % of the axes are made from sources such as mudstone and shale. By contrast with the porcellanite, these rock types occur very widely and it would appear that most of these axes were used close to the localities where they were made. The detailed examination of samples taken from the axes has already provided us with a range of new information and a re-evaluation of our ideas about the exploitation of resources in the earlier prehistoric period. For example, it has shown that not only were axes made in Ireland being exported, but that also axes were imported from different parts of Britain, including the Lake District, southwest Wales and Cornwall. This evidence indicates that there were continued and widespread contacts across the Irish Sea during the Neolithic period and it seems very likely that exotic axes would have been perceived as having a special value by the individuals or groups who possessed them (and those that didn't!). The most exotic axes are a small number of jadeite from the Alpine area which demonstrate contact with continental Europe and they also show that the form of the object was important as these axes of semi-precious stone and very high quality do not appear to have been used in any every-day, functional sense.

A number of distinct stages can be recognised in the manufacture of axes. Firstly a suitable rock type had to be identified and in some cases people went to considerable lengths to exploit particularly valued sources, such as porcellanite. In other instances they appear to have used whatever was locally available, even when the stone was not really suitable for the purpose. The initial task was to get a piece of rock to work with. This could involve extracting stone from a rock face, indeed at Brockley quarrying into the porcellanite resulted in the creation of at least two small galleries. Alternatively, large boulders could have been utilised or, at the other end of the scale, pebbles from a beach or river bed, that had naturally been worn into a rough axe shape were used. This would appear to have been the case on the coast at Fisherstreet, Co. Clare where wave action modified cobbles of shale so that minimum work was needed to make them into axes. Depending on the texture of the rock, whether it was coarse-grained or smooth-grained, different processes were then used to work the stone into the rough shape of an axe, a stage known as the rough-out. Fine-grained stone, such as the porcellanite, could be chipped or flaked in a similar and predictable manner to flint and chert, while coarse-grained stones, such as dolerite, gabbro and sandstone were hammered and pecked as they would have withstood any attempt at flaking. Having got to the roughout stage, a process that for flaked axes can be replicated today in about half an hour, the arduous part of the process still had to be carried out. This was the removal of the surface irregularities by grinding, in most cases using a softer rock, such as sandstone, as a grindstone with the lubrication of water. In Ireland and Britain grinding and then polishing of the axes was carried out, in most cases, not at the axe production sites but, presumably, on settlements nearby. On Lambay Island off the coast of county Dublin field survey and excavation has revealed the presence of what appears to be a production site where porphyritic andesite, an attractively coloured dark green rock with large creamy feldspar crystals, was quarried, broken into suitable sizes and hammered/pecked using large granite and conglomerate cobbles and ground using a variety of sandstone rubbers. This site is of major potential as it would appear that all the stages of production are present and it is the first

site recognised in Ireland or Britain where a coarse-grained stone was being worked.

It is clear that in some cases axes were deliberately taken out of use by being deposited in a range of different contexts. 'Burying the hatchet' would appear to have been an activity that was often charged with symbolism. For example groups or hoards of axes were placed in the ground. Axes were deemed suitable as grave goods, for example a chisel was found with a Bronze Age Cordoned Urn cremation burial at Monasterboice, Co. Louth. They were also used to mark particular events, such as the closing up of megalithic tombs, as at Ballymacaldrack, Co. Antrim where the blocking sealing the entrance included two axes. Given the importance of axes as an everyday item we can understand how they took on a wider currency and symbolism. The full subtleties of how axes were used and what they symbolised would of course have been part and parcel of a body of inherent, traditional knowledge open to new meanings over time for the people who used the axes. The Irish Stone Axe Project is applying new approaches to squeeze some of the tremendous range of information about prehistoric people, settlement and society from stone axes. It has only been possible to conduct a long-term research project of this scale because of the continued financial support of a research grant from the Heritage Council and the cooperation of many museums, in particular the National Museum of Ireland and the Ulster Museum which hold the major collections of Irish stone axes.

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NEWS FROM THE IRISH HISTORIC TOWNS ATLAS OFFICE

Months of hard work came to satisfactory fruition last winter. First of all, *Irish historic towns atlas no. 7 Maynooth* by Dr Arnold Horner was completed just before Christmas. *Maynooth* had been moved up the production schedule so that publication would coincide with the bicentenary year of St Patrick's College. It has proved to be a very rewarding fascicle — *Maynooth* may be one of the smallest towns tackled to date, but its redevelopment as an estate town from the 1750s makes a fascinating history, graphically illustrated by a succession of estate maps from 1757 to 1821. Changing technology has made it affordable to print these facsimile maps in colour, most effectively, for the first time in the series. *Maynooth* is also relatively well served with old illustrations, and a number of these have been included. *Maynooth* was launched, courtesy of St Patrick's College, Maynooth, at a function held in the College on 1 March. There was the pleasant feeling, so often achieved at the local launch, of stepping through the history of the town; past the castle with its gatehouse, and the old yew trees connected with the sixteenth-century Council House, past late-eighteenth-century Stoyte House leased as the first building of the college in 1795, and so into the quadrangles of the last century. Dr Horner spoke eloquently about the history of *Maynooth*, both topographical and social. Present at a launch for the first time, Professor Adriaan Verhulst, President of the International Commission for the History of Towns, praised both the Irish atlas and Professor Simms's co-chairmanship of the Commission's working party on atlases.

The other main event has been the completion, and launch by President Mary Robinson, of the first bound volume. This involved the collation of all the loose pages from the first six fascicles to make up 200 copies, a time-consuming task (we found ourselves counting pages in our sleep!). These 200 copies have been issued as a numbered edition; it may be possible to bind a further 100 copies when present stocks are sold out, but it will always remain a strictly limited edition. Sales so far are excellent. The launch itself was one of

the first major events to be held in the newly-refurbished Academy House (even before its official reopening). In addition to making fascicles available in bound form, a further 100 individual fascicles have been issued for each of the first six towns. This means that *Kildare*, for instance, which was completely out of print, is once more available, although copies of this too are selling fast.

Bord Fáilte has again made heritage towns funding available for a research assistant and conservation architect Ms Sheena Meagher is working part-time in the office. 'Downpatrick' (Dr Ronnie Buchanan and Mr Tony Wilson) will be next to appear, scheduled for later this year, to be followed by 'Bray' (Mrs Davies), 'Kilkenny' (Mr John Bradley) and, in the not-too-distant future, large cities such as Derry, Dublin (part 1), Belfast (part 1) and Limerick. We are looking ahead to the completion of the second bound volume before the end of the century!

MARY DAVIES
ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY

Irish Historic Towns Atlas: editors Annagret Simms, H.B. Clarke and Raymond Gillespie; consultant editor J.H. Andrews; cartographic editor K.M. Davies. Nos 1-6 Kildare, Carrickfergus, Bandon, Kells, Mullingar, Athlone now available either singly or together as volume one, no. 7 Maynooth available singly, from the Royal Irish Academy or from main booksellers. Price £15 (1 and 2), £18 (3, 4, 5, 6 and 7), £95 (bound volume).

THE HERITAGE COUNCIL

In 1988, the then Taoiseach, Mr Charles J. Haughey, T. D., appointed a National Heritage Council whose functions included advising the Government on matters relating to the national heritage, funding heritage projects, and advising on legislation to establish the Council on a statutory basis. Much of the time and energy of the National Heritage Council was devoted to preparing the legislation to place the Council on a statutory footing. The culmination of these efforts resulted in the 1995 Heritage Act which was signed by the President on 10th April 1995.

The Heritage Act, 1995 provides for the appointment of a statutory Heritage Council. The functions of the Council are to propose policies and priorities for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of the national heritage. The national heritage is defined as including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, such as genealogical records, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens, parks and inland waterways.

A particular function of the Council is to promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in the national heritage, and facilitate the appreciation and enjoyment of it. To achieve this, it will liaise and co-operate with public authorities, educational bodies and other persons and organisations. It is required to appoint standing committees on archaeology, architectural heritage, inland waterways and wild life. It may also appoint other committees to assist it in performing its functions.

The functions previously exercised by the National Monuments Council and the Wildlife Advisory Council become the responsibility of the Heritage Council.

The Council may make recommendations to the Minister on any matters relating to its functions, it may publicise such recommendations and the Minister is required to respond to the Council within six months. The Council will have its own staff and headquarters which are to be located in Kilkenny.

The process of setting up the Heritage Council was completed in March, 1996 with the nomination by the Minister for Arts, Culture

and the Gaeltach, Mr. Michael D. Higgins, T.D., of three members to each of the four mandatory Standing Committees. These nominations included the appointment of the Group's honorary secretary, Mr. Michael O'Hanrahan, to be a member of the Standing Committee on Archaeology. The membership of this committee also includes Dr. Terry Barry and Dr. Chris Lynn, both of whom are members of GSIHS. Dr. Barry is a former hon. secretary and president of the Group, of which in he is now a vice-president. The other members of the Standing Committee on Archaeology are Dr. Michael Ryan (chairman) Ms. Mary Cahill, Mr. Ted Creedon, Alderman Michael Conaghan, Rev. Tomás Ó Caoimh, Professor Barry Raftery, Mr. David Slattery, Professor John Waddell and Mrs. Primrose Wilson.

EDITOR

OBITUARY

NOEL CASSIDY: AN APPRECIATION

Many members of the G.S.I.H.S. will be sorry to hear that, since our last conference, Noel Cassidy has died. Although Noel hadn't been able to attend the last couple of conferences he was one of our most enthusiastic and congenial comrades at past outings and was also a member of the committee during the 1980s. My own introduction to Noel (after I had moved to Waterford in 1979) was at the G.S.I.H.S. conference in Nenagh in May 1980. Noel had travelled to Nenagh with his Old Waterford Society friends, Des Cowman and Tom Nolan. I had travelled independently on my first driving expedition out of Waterford in my first car. We met at the conference and I was press-ganged into travelling back to Waterford in convoy with them. It was an exciting and memorable journey for a novice driver. Numerous sites of historical interest were visited in a hair-raising rally through the Silvermines and the Devil's bit mountain! Subsequently Noel and I travelled in tandem to most G.S.I.H.S. conferences from Dundrum (Co. Down) to Ballyvaughan and Drogheda and, on a couple of occasions, such as at The Hook, he deputised for me with my money box and registration list.

Noel loved G.S.I.H.S. conferences and outings. His involvement in the Group arose out of his involvement in the Old Waterford Society, of which he was a most enthusiastic member. School holidays for Noel and other teachers, like Tom Nolan and Des Cowman, were often spent in putting together copies of the O.W.S. Journal, "Decies", in the days when the Gestetner stencil was the height of technology and the whole committee and other recruits would be required to collate the journal by hand, walking around long tables in the Teachers' Centre.

His close involvement with the Group dated from 1979 when the G.S.I.H.S. held its conference in Waterford and Noel and his colleagues in the Old Waterford Society were involved in organising the weekend's activities. Most of my memories of him relate to G.S.I.H.S. events. I can see him still: listening avidly to Kenneth Nicholls from the slopes of a trivallate ringfort, at Committee meetings in Terry Barry's office in Trinity, enthusiastically suggesting further expeditions which required us to travel north after the Dundrum conference at 4.00 pm on a Sunday afternoon when we still had to return to Waterford that night and school the next morning.

Noel had all the wonder and enthusiasm for local history of the true "amateur", he just loved to spend all the spare time he had available on local history pursuits, whether reading or attending lectures indoors or exploring and revisiting historical sites outdoors. Outdoors was where he loved to be; whether walking in the mountains; exploring his native Roscommon; revisiting his own particular favourite sites, such as Mothel; discovering places he had read and heard about; or simply walking the dog. Noel's death last

October came quite suddenly following a short illness and came as a great shock to his family and friends in Waterford. He had retired from teaching and was enjoying his retirement greatly, providing him, as it did, with opportunities to read and pursue further his local historical interests.

NIAMH CROWLEY
WATERFORD
HONORARY TREASURER.

NOTICE BOARD
Group for the Study of
Irish Historic Settlement

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1996
Friday 10th to Sunday 12th May 1996

Theme: 'South Mayo and its settlement'

Venue: The Olde Railway Hotel, Westport Co. Mayo.

Speakers: Paul Gosling (UCG), Nollaig Ó Muraíle.
(QUB), Helen Perros (Nth. Carolina), Bernadette Cunningham
(Dublin Diocesan Library) Sheila Hurley (Westport Historical
Society) Joe McDermott (Mayo Archaeological and Historical
Society) and Desmond McCabe (TCD).

Further information: Michael O'Hanrahan, Hon. Secretary,
12, Oak Road, Duke's Meadow, Kilkenny.
Tel: 056 21667

THE NORMAN CONNECTION
Fifth Annual Conference
Friday 27th to Sunday 29th September, 1996

Venue: Hotel Naomh Seosamh, Fethard-on-Sea.
Co. Wexford.

Further information: Billy Colfer,
Slade, The Hook Co. Wexford.
TEL: 051 397442

ROSCREA AUTUMN CONFERENCE
Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd November 1996

Theme: 'Enduring Sermons: the medieval church on
the Irish landscape'

Venue: Mount St. Joseph's Abbey, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.

Further information: George Cunningham, M. Litt.
Parkmore, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary
Tel: 0505 21619

THE GROUP FOR THE STUDY OF
IRISH HISTORIC SETTLEMENT

The Group was founded in 1969 to encourage, co-ordinate and publish the study of Irish historic settlement, and to offer advice on matters relating to historic settlement which are of national and local concern.

The Group attempts to achieve these aims through an annual weekend conference, comprising lectures and fieldtrips, focusing on a particular area, and through publication of a biannual *Newsletter*

and a series of scholarly monographs written by settlement experts.

Membership and participation in the annual conference and fieldtrips is open to all. Further information may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary: Mr. Michael O'Hanrahan, 12 Oak Road, Dukes Meadows, Kilkenny, Ireland.

IRISH SETTLEMENT STUDIES

1. B. J. Graham. *Anglo-Norman Settlement in Ireland*. (1985). *Out of print*.
2. C. T. Cairns. *Irish tower houses: a Co. Tipperary case study*. (1987). *Out of print*.
3. Rolf Loeber. *The geography and practise of English colonisation in Ireland, 1534-1609*. (1991).
4. B. J. Graham and L. Proudfoot. *Urban improvement in provincial Ireland, 1700-1840*. (1994).
5. J. H. Andrews. *Interpreting the Irish landscape: explorations in settlement history*. (1996).
6. M. Stout. *Irish ring-forts*. (Forthcoming).

Nos. 3 and 4 are available from Dr H. Murtagh, Mount View, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, at IR£6.00 each. No. 5 and subsequent numbers, are being published in association with Four Courts Press, Kill Lane, Blackrock, County Dublin, Ireland, from whom copies will be available as well as from bookshops.

SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE

The annual subscription for 1996-97 (IR£7. Students IR£5.) is due on 1st. May 1996. This may be sent direct to the Hon. Treasurer or paid by Bank Standing Order (the preferred method). A subscription renewal form incorporating a standing order mandate, is included with this *Newsletter*.

Members in Great Britain and Northern Ireland may now pay their annual subscription in sterling, by cheque or standing order.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 1996 Annual Conference, which will have as its theme 'South Mayo and its settlement', will be held in the Olde Railway Hotel, Westport, Co. Mayo from Friday 12th to Sunday 14th May, 1996. (see 'Notice Board') A notice providing full particulars will have been received by members during April.

The views expressed in articles and reviews are the responsibility of the authors and are the copyright of IRISH HISTORIC SETTLEMENT NEWSLETTER and the individual contributors.

Contributions are invited on topics related to historic settlement in Ireland and the Irish-sea region, the history conservation and interpretation of the cultural landscape and on local and regional studies. These should be sent to the Editor, Mr. Michael O'Hanrahan, at 12 Oak Road, Duke's Meadows, Kilkenny (Telephone 056-21667: Fax 056-63889). Contributors are requested, where possible, to supply material both in typescript and on disc - preferably Microsoft Word (Macintosh or MS DOS).

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